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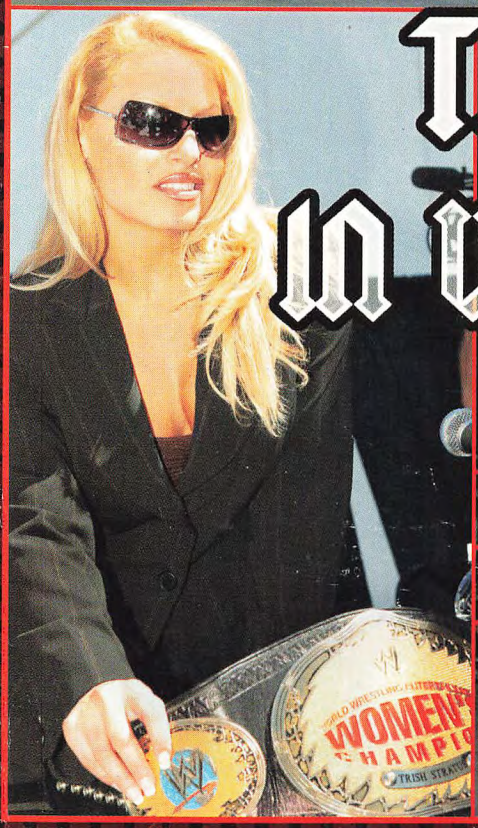

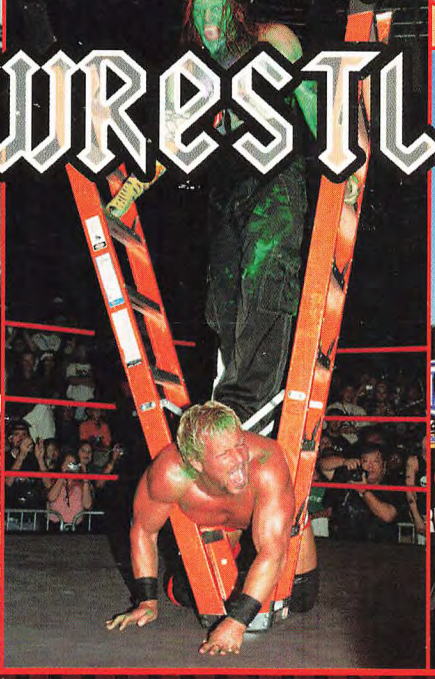

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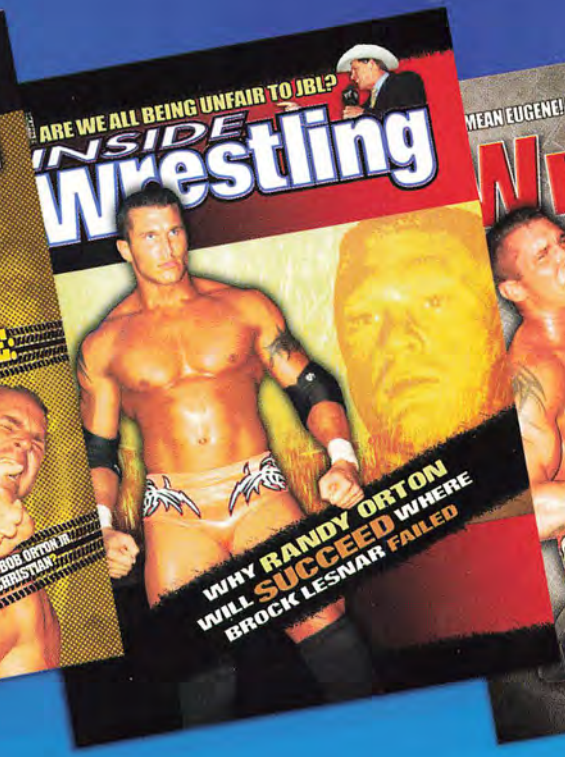

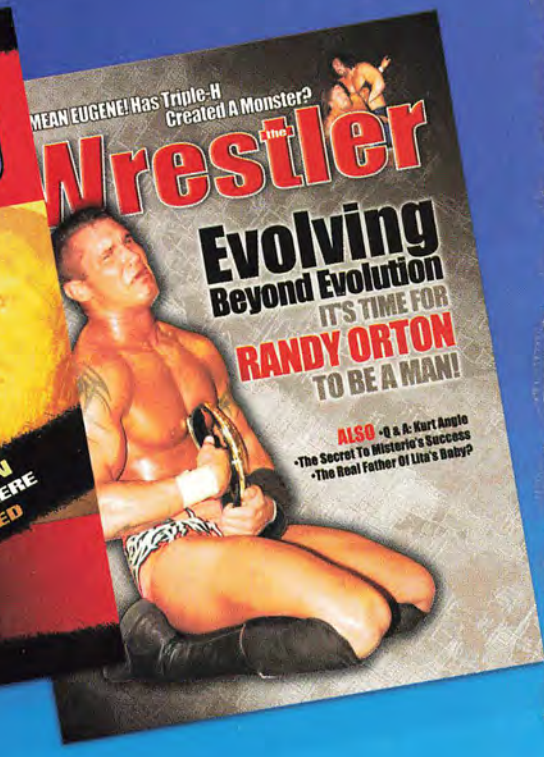

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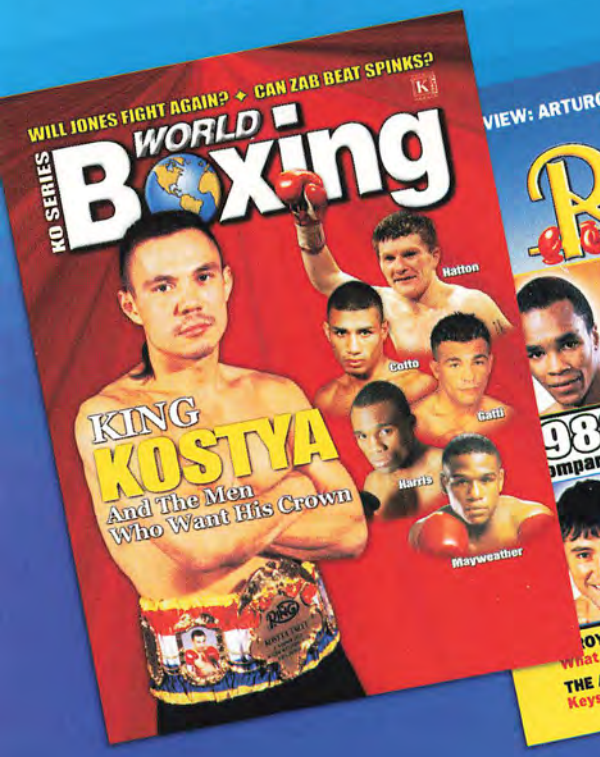

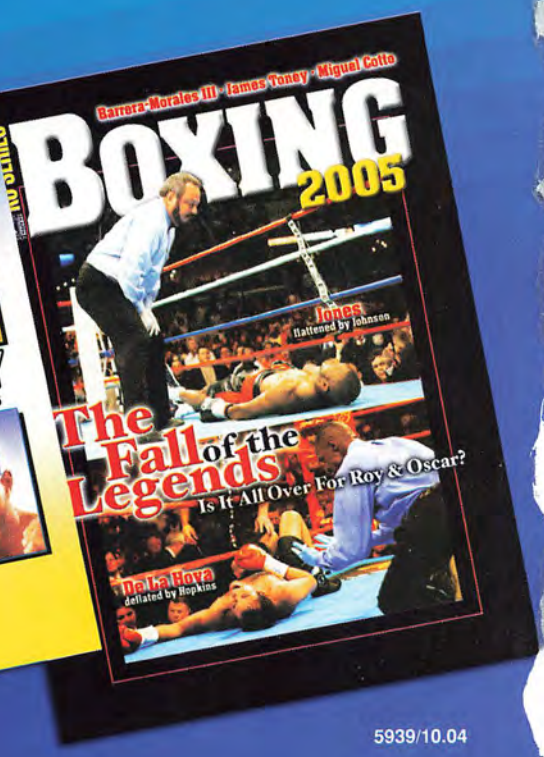

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from the desk of...

THE AFTERMATH OF the horrific incident in Auburn Hills, Michigan, in which NBA players went into the stands to brawl with fans, has instigated high-level meetings in the corporate offices of every major sport in the land.

Even though he was quick to poke fun at that incident at the same time he was spoofing the Terrell Owens-Nicollette Sheridan *Monday Night Football* towel skit controversy, I'm quite certain Vince McMahon did the responsible thing and circulated a memo to the folks at WWE, warning them that such behavior would not be tolerated. But it probably wasn't necessary. For as bad a rep as professional wrestling has in the mainstream, I have never in all my years seen anything that was even close to what happened near the conclusion of the Pistons-Pacers game at The Palace.

There are, of course, altercations between fans and wrestlers, but most of them are of the verbal nature—and most of those are within the context of what wrestling is supposed to be: "good" fans showing their displeasure with "evil" wrestlers. Sometimes things get overheated and fans shower the ring with objects. ECW fans will recall Buh Buh Ray Dudley nearly inciting a mini-riot or two at the ECW Arena with a few choice—and unprintable—words. For sure, there have been several incidents over the years in which unsuspecting fans have gone so far as to stab wrestlers (victims that immediately come to mind are Ole Anderson and Blackjack Mulligan). The difference between NBA athletes and pro wrestlers is that, by and large, wrestlers fully understand their relationship to the paying customers. If they can elicit a passionate reaction from fans, they have done their job. At the same time, they show a level of appreciation for fans that athletes in other sports rarely do.

Many mainstream pro athletes think that their seven- or even eight-figure salaries are their birthrights. The money will be there for them whether there are 20,000 people in the arena or 20. Pro wrestlers, on the other hand, are keen to the economics of their sport. They understand that there is a direct correlation between the amount of paying customers and the amount they will ultimately earn. In spite of what are for the most part playful barbs traded between wrestlers and fans, there is mutual respect. Listening to sports talk radio in the days and weeks after Basketbrawl, I'm convinced that such a relationship does not exist between mainstream athletes and their paying customers. Fans see players as "rich, spoiled punks," and Basketbrawl just reinforced the stereotype. Given a chance to show remorse for his behavior on the *Today* show a few days after the incident, a grinning Ron Artest used the forum to promote his new rap CD.

Artest obviously is not bright enough to understand how much damage he is doing to the NBA at a time when the league can ill afford any further erosion of its fan base. The Players' Association, which could have helped bridge the gap between the league and its fans by throwing support behind David Stern's season-long suspension of Artest, did the safe and predictable thing by appealing the commissioner's decision.

Is it possible for what happened in Auburn Hills to happen at a professional wrestling event? Yes, one would be naive to suggest otherwise. It's far more likely to happen at an independent show, where the wrestlers are more accessible when arriving to and departing from the ring—and where there is no one employer to enforce a code of conduct. If a similar incident were to occur—particularly in light of the attention brought to Basketbrawl—I don't think Vince McMahon would be even as kind as Stern.

One fan sent a letter to *New York Post* columnist Phil Mushnick recently, decrying what he felt was the leniency of the NBA. "Ron Artest should be grateful that all he got was a suspension for charging into the stands. If he'd been a circus elephant, he'd have been shot."

I'm not sure McMahon would have even been that kind.

Stu Saks
Publisher

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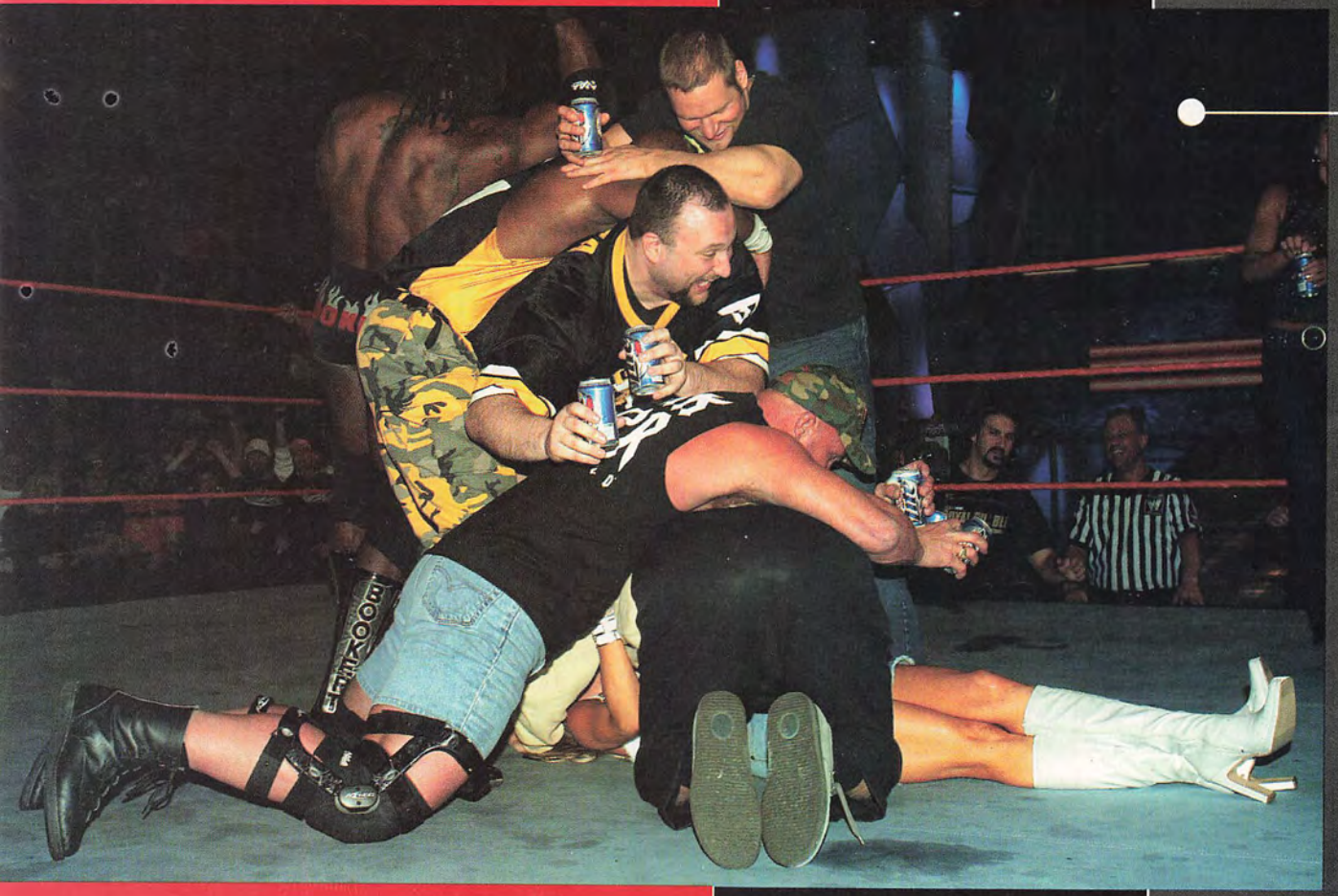

PWI®

March 2005

contents

features

28 **2004: THE YEAR IN REVIEW**
We take you back to some of the more outrageous stories and moments of the past year, the most memorable quotes, ridiculous photos, notable numbers, and a lot more

61 **THE *PWI* ACHIEVEMENT 2004 AWARDS**
This was your chance to tell us who you thought was the year's best wrestler ... the best rookie ... the woman who made the biggest impact ... the most popular (and hated) wrestler ... and much more. Plus our Stanley Weston Award for lifetime achievement

85 **YOUR UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS FOR 2004**
This is the section that you write. Every year you come up with your own offbeat awards and name the most deserving recipients. Your ideas this year were every bit as hilarious as we expected them to be!

90 **PREDICTIONS: 2005**
You get to tell us what you think will happen in wrestling during the next 12 months. Be sure to check this section this time next year and see if you were right

92 **PHANTASTIC PHOTOS OF 2004**
We spent hours combing through our archives and found what we feel are the 10 best (and/or funniest) photos of 2004. Each one has earned a full page in the magazine

130 ***PWI* SUPERSTATS**
A handy reference guide for every serious wrestling fan. We list all past Achievement Award winners and runners-up, as well as all the 2004 title changes in the major federations

144 **MEMORIES OF 2004: EDITORS' PICKS**
What image from the last year in wrestling will stick with you? Members of our staff offer their selections

departments

3 **FROM THE DESK OF ... Stuart M. Saks**
Can wrestling ever have its own basket-brawl?

8 **BEFORE THE BELL**
Strange WWE T-shirts, "Talkin' Trash," "Internet Insider," more

12 **RINGSIDE with Will Welsh**
A huge list of WWE cuts, TNA Victory Road fallout, and more!

16 **IN FOCUS by Dave Lenker**
The best of *your* outrageous top 10 lists!

18 **OFF THE TOP ROPE with Brandi Mankiewicz**
Mail call for our very own "Queen"

22 **INDEPENDENT ROUNDUP by Liz Hunter**
What's been happening on some of the smaller shows

24 **THE INTERNATIONAL REPORT by Mike Spillane**
Scary injury in Japan, no more Ultimo Dragon, and more

26 **OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS**
Rankings in more than 20 different categories!

102 **THE BUSINESS PAGE by Harry Burkett**
The big stories, the latest ratings, WWE stockwatch, and more!

106 **THE STEEL CAGE by Jason Langin**
Why 2004 was a year for *wrestling* fans to be thankful

108 **WIN, LOSE, OR DRAW by Harry Burkett**
Did Vince McMahon fool us all during the past year?

110 **THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER by Dan Murphy**
Murph looks at the 10 most ridiculous things he remembers from 2004

114 **12 QUESTIONS WITH ... KENNY "THE KING" BOLIN**
Wait until you read about this OVW manager's, *um*, workout regimen

116 ***WRESTLING OBSERVER* HALL OF FAME**
Bruiser Brody was hardcore before anyone knew hardcore

118 **ARENA REPORTS**
Key results from around the globe, plus all the year's PPVs

128 **BETWEEN FALLS**
Just Desserts; More Props For Benoit; ROH Convert

146 **DRAWING BLOOD**
Jason "Mr. J" Conlan offers his twisted year-end picks

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LOOK FOR THE SPRING 2005 ISSUE OF *PWI PRESENTS (WRESTLING ANNUAL)* ON SALE FEBRUARY 8, 2005

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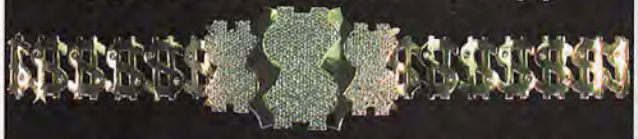

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Steve Austin (with vest) (WWEP024)
Ric Flair (in robe) (WWEP025)
Steve Austin (pointing) (WWEP026)
Sable (in bikini) (WWEP027)
Goldberg (slamming Steven Richards) (WWEP028)
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Chris Jericho (with vest) (WWEP031)
Gail Kim (studio shot) (WWEP032)
The Rock (doing Sharpshooter) (WWEP033)
Undertaker (black vest) (WWEP034)
Undertaker (falling on John Cena) (WWEP035)

Lita (in net shirt) (WWEP0066)
Tajiri (spitting at Kidman) (WWEP0065)
The Rock (arm raised) (WWEP0060)
Stacy Keibler (black outfit) (WWEP0061)
Chris Benoit (doing Crossface) (WWEP0062)
Big Show (doing chokeslam) (WWEP0063)
John Cena (holding U.S. belt) (WWEP091)
Undertaker (*WrestleMania XX*) (WWEP093)
Stacy Keibler (Bra & Panties Match) (WWEP096)
John Cena (studio) (WWEP097)
Rikishi & Scotty 2 Hotty (WWEP094)
Miss Jackie (cheerleader) (WWEP095)
Kurt Angle (studio) (WWEP090)
Eddie Guerrero (holding belt) (WWEP092)
Rob Van Dam (studio) (WWEP087)
Goldberg (pressing Randy Orton) (WWE036)
John Cena (slamming Undertaker) (WWE037)
Brock Lesnar (giving Kurt Angle F-5) (WWEP038)
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Scott Steiner (studio shot) (WWEP040)
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Y2J (Ass Clown) pendant (WWEPENDANT007)
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Goldust face pendant (WWEPENDANT015)
Goldberg pendant (WWEPENDANT016)
Rey Mysterio 619 logo pendant (WWEPENDANT017)
Steve Austin 3:16 skull pendant (WWEPENDANT018)
Rey Mysterio mask pendant (WWEPENDANT019)
Brock Lesnar tattoo logo pendant (WWEPENDANT020)
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Backlash 2003	(WWEDVD26)	$20.00	(WWEVIDEO26)	$20.00
Bad Blood 2003	(WWEDVD30)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO30)	$20.00
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before the bell

Compiled by Will Welsh

Fun With T-Shirts!

About 18 months ago, a federal judge in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, threw out a lawsuit filed by WWE against Big Dog Sportswear, a clothing company that produced parody T-shirts featuring likenesses of The Rock, "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, and various other WWE wrestlers. In a 50-page opinion, the judge said that the Big Dog spoofs of WWE figures, such as Bone-Cold Steve Pawstin and The Underdogger, were protected by the First Amendment.

"Big Dog's parodies convey a simple message that business and product images need not always be taken too seriously, and we are reminded that we are free to laugh at the images and associations linked with these icons," wrote the judge.

WWE higher-ups refused to let the judge's decision dissuade them from action. Instead of letting Big Dog continue to produce WWE parody T-shirts all by its lonesome, WWE has fought back by producing a few parody T-shirts of its own. For now, the company has made available two parody T-shirts, featuring none other than The Undertaker and Triple-H. (What a brilliant move on the part of WWE. If WWE main-eventers such as 'Taker and HHH have parody T-shirts that make fun of them and make their characters look silly, then the mid-card and undercard wrestlers can't really complain when the marketing department comes up with somewhat-humiliating parody T-shirts for them, can they?)

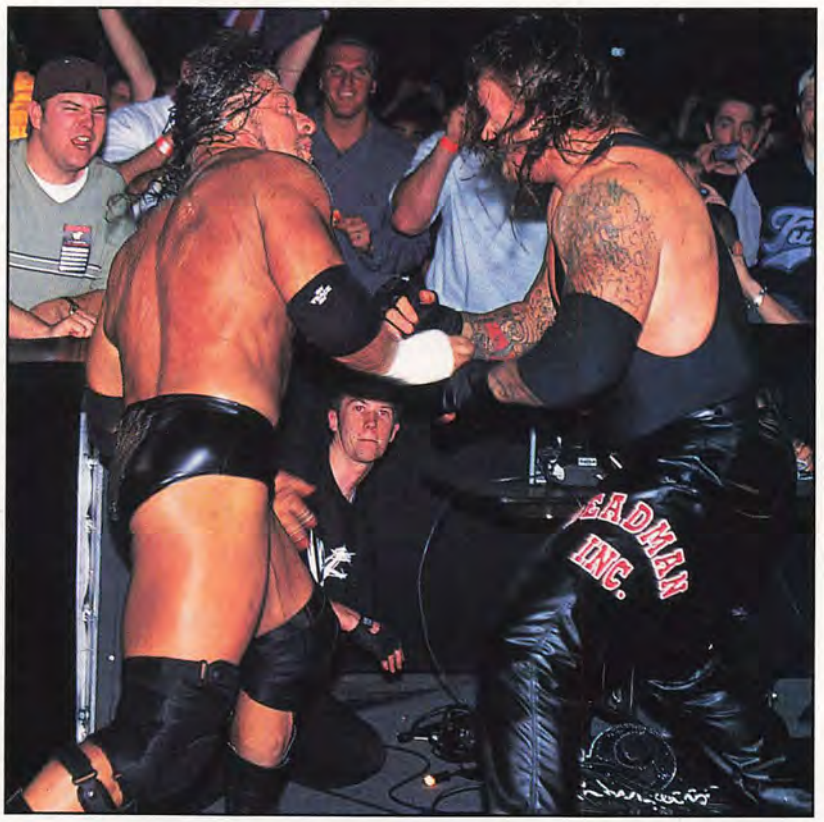
The Undertaker's parody T-shirt shows us what his character might have been like had he been popular during the days when our nation was first founded. Instead of playing up his dark side, the T-shirt pokes fun by dressing him up in a centuries-old wig and hat combination and calling him "The UnderQuaker." No, the idea behind it isn't exactly scary, but the picture of 'Taker dressed as a Quaker sure is, at least in an "Oh my gosh, he's so ugly I can't stand it" kind of way.

You know, it's probably for the best that he's never gone with that look.

Triple-H's parody T-shirt will also make you chuckle, but we wonder what kind of person would wear it out in public—and on what occasions he'd wear it! The front of the short is adorned with the box for a product known as Preparation Triple-H, while the back of the shirt provides the instructions for its use: "Apply before your next a** beating."

Pretty funny, but also more than a bit too crude to wear to your grandmother's for a nice Sunday night dinner, don't ya think? Exactly how would you explain it to a non-wrestling fan?

Now, we know that our readers are some of the most creative in the world. You must have ideas for other parody T-shirts of your favorite WWE superstars—and we want to know what they are! Send your submissions to "Parody T-shirts," Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. If we get any good ones, maybe we'll try to design them for you and then show you the results here, in "Before The Bell."



Talkin' Trash

Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling-related things you've been talking about lately, and our gut reaction to each.

10. Hulk Hogan, at the invite of Panda Energy CEO Bob Carter, watches TNA Victory Road from backstage. There's nothing like a surprise appearance by Hulk Hogan to rally the troops! Right, "Macho"?

9. Jushin "Thunder" Liger makes his debut for Ring of Honor. Well, at least a small percentage of you are talking about this.

8. Vince Russo departs TNA ... for good ... he says. Say so long to one of your favorite newsmakers (maybe).

7. William Regal and Eugene defeat La Resistance to win the Raw tag team title. Anything we'd write here might be horribly un-PC, so we'll settle for "Congratulations!"

6. Simon Dean pitches his weight loss product on *Raw*. Even though he acts like a jackass, he sure does remind us of this superhero we once knew ... in ECW, wasn't it?

5. Joanie "Chyna" Laurer is in the midst of taping episodes of VH1's *The Surreal Life 4*. Hold up, it gets better. Verne Troyer, a.k.a. Mini-Me, is in the house as well! Sounds like must-see TV!

4. Kevin Nash goes into business for himself by cutting an unscripted promo during his second live appearance with TNA. Duh!

3. *Tough Enough* contestant Daniel Puder nearly makes Kurt Angle tap out during an impromptu wrestling match on *Smackdown*. Yeah, amazingly enough, this actually happened. However, WWE's decision to not try to capitalize on the situation is even more amazing.

2. Kevin Nash and Scott Hall help Jeff Jarrett retain his NWA championship by clobbering his Victory Road opponent, Jeff Hardy, with guitars. Duh!

1. WWE releases 12 wrestlers: Rico, Test, A-Train, Billy Gunn, Rodney Mack, Jazz, Gail Kim, Chuck Palumbo, Johnny Stamboli, Nidia, Lamont, and Linda "Shaniqua" Miles. *Hmmmmmm* ... releasing two former *Tough Enough* championships while the $1,000,000 *Tough Enough* competition is underway seems awfully ominous.

The Internet Insider

The following news items were culled from various wrestling-related Web sites—or were they? See if you can pick out the items that were actually reported on the Internet (which doesn't necessarily mean that they are true) and the ones we blatantly made up. The answers appear at the end of this column on page 11.

1. WWE wrestlers, upon hearing that Test, A-Train, and Billy Gunn were released from their contracts, started a release pool of sorts. All of the wrestlers who wanted to participate put in $50 and then drew numbers to see where in the release draft they would pick. Although every wrestler remained mum on whom he or she picked—which could have made for a real interesting news story—some of the wrestlers did get a kick out of watching The Undertaker tell Triple-H that he couldn't participate because he was married to Stephanie McMahon and thus might have inside information.

2. Jeff Hardy recently no-showed a TNA *Impact* taping without answering phone calls from TNA office staffers because he had a snake in his house. Hardy later explained that he hates snakes and spent days in a panic while plotting how to remove the snake from his

home. Apparently, Hardy has such a strong phobia that he was too frightened to call an exterminator, let alone pick up the phone when the office called to check on him. In fact, he was so panic-stricken that he couldn't just leave the house—he had to take a picture of the snake, which he used as an alibi.

3. TNA officials and wrestlers visited the set of WWE's Royal Rumble commercial shoot, which was being held at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida—where *Impact* is taped each week. Jeremy Borash, David Sahadi, Abyss, Shane Douglas, Tracy Brooks, and 3 Live Kru all came over to visit. The whole crew brought cookies, and Abyss brought balloons as well, as a way to welcome WWE to TNA's home. Although everyone was said to be friendly, Vince McMahon was less than thrilled to hear about it, and legal threats were made.

4. Kevin Nash was reportedly telling a lot of people backstage at TNA's Victory Road that he was looking forward to wrestling A.J. Styles down the line. Nash was said to have been very impressed with Styles' wrestling and even pushed matchmakers to allow Styles to confront him and Scott Hall at the end of the pay-per-view.

This Month in Wrestling History

March

March 14, 1887: Evan "Strangler" Lewis (the original Strangler Lewis) beats Joe Acton in Chicago, Illinois, to win the American catch-as-catch-can championship. (And 118 years later, we're still trying to decipher exactly what "catch-as-catch-can" means.)

March 15, 1905: Tom Jenkins defeats Frank Gotch at Madison Square Garden to regain the American championship. After the two men split the first two falls, Jenkins digs down and takes the third fall in 10:31 to win the title for a record third time. (Record third time? Hah! Mr. Jenkins, please meet Mr. Ric Flair, 16-time world heavyweight champion. *Whoooooo!)*

March 11, 1937: A number of wrestlers, objecting to newspaper criticism, perform a brief sitdown strike in a Washington, D.C., ring. (Yeah ... lotta good that strike did.)

March 6, 1992: Former WWF star Paul Roma's pro boxing debut results in a fourth-round loss to Jerry Arentzen in Callicoon, New York, when Roma's manager, Kevin Rooney, throws in the towel. (When we asked current *Ring* magazine Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins about this all-time classic bout, his response was, "Roma who?")

March 24, 1996: "Diamond" Dallas Page's wrestling career apparently ends when he is pinned by The Booty Man (Brutus Beefcake) at WCW Uncensored. According to a prematch stipulation, Page has to retire. He would be reinstated several months later when a legal loophole in the match contract was found. (We appreciated that match stipulation, because in our opinion, losing to someone stupid enough to cal himself The Booty Man should have at least been grounds for immediate retirement for any man.)

We Heard That!

"You have to have it like the Boston Red Sox. You've got to have a mix of veterans and guys who are ready to step up to the plate like they have. Everybody has to be used in the right positions and you have to get everybody moving in the same direction. The new talent has definitely got to step up and rise to the occasion."

—NWA champion and TNA minority owner Jeff Jarrett, discussing the makeup of TNA's roster, in an interview with www.wrestlingobserver.com

"Giant Silva is another guy who came through (the WWE developmental system). That's not really something to brag about."

—Former WWE office worker Tom Prichard, while discussing the effectiveness of WWE's developmental system, during an interview with the *Pro Wrestling Torch*

"Personally, I just wanted some mahi mahi. The only thing I had to eat all day was a stinking cold sandwich from my cheap freelance producer. Now I know how the other half eats."

—TNA wrestler B.G. James, on why he (along with other TNA wrestlers) crashed a WWE Royal Rumble commercial shoot, in a press release sent out by TNA

"Talent-wise, there's quite a few of [today's superstars] that are every bit as good as the wrestlers of my generation. Particularly if you attend any of WWE's untelevised live events where TV time constraints are not a factor, you'll see tremendous matches from a lot of these young guys."

—Former NWA World heavyweight champion Harley Race, praising the talents of today's wrestlers, in an interview with wwe.com

"There was no feasible reason to book this match [Lance Storm vs. Chris Benoit] other than for the interest in a competitive wrestling contest. I was struggling in the middle of the roster with no direction and Benoit was finally breaking through as a genuine main-eventer. I would have loved to see this match as a fan, too, but I don't think I would have booked it either, considering where we both were in the company at the time."

—Lance Storm, being incredibly honest about why WWE never booked him against Chris Benoit before he retired earlier this year, on www.stormwrestling.com

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This photo of Linda "Shaniqua" Miles (who was recently released by WWE) eliciting a strange look from JBL needs a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com, or slap a stamp on an envelope and snail-mail it to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three issues from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.

August's Best

"I know you like it, but don't you dare steal The Rock's new hairdo!"
—Sharon Frazier, gordiz_98@yahoo.com

"No, you can't come out on the town with me, jabroni. I said I'm going out for pie, but I think you've got the wrong idea."
—Joe Mufalli, Ocean Gate, NJ

"The Rock says ... I just saved a ton of money on my car insurance by switching to Geico!"
—Stephen Pieczatkowski, Philadelphia, PA

"The Rock's only going to say this one time, jabroni. Those Ho-Hos belonged to The Rock!"
—Jamie71672@aol.com

"I don't care how long you pout—you can't be in The Rock's next movie!"
—Frank G. Lloyd Jr., Richwood, WV

Answers to Internet Insider:

Items 1 and 4 are totally made up.

ringside

With Will Welsh

IN EARLY-NOVEMBER, WWE executives finally ordered roster cuts that had been rumored to be in the works for many months. Although they all weren't announced at once, when WWE was finally through, it had eliminated 10 wrestlers from its main roster as well as two wrestlers from its developmental system.

The purging started slowly enough, with an announcement from WWE that it had released **Test**, **A-Train**, and **Billy Gunn**. However, by the time the cuts were over, **Chuck Palumbo**, **Johnny Stamboli**, **Rico**, **Rodney Mack**, **Jazz**, **Nidia**, and **Gail Kim** had all received their walking papers. WWE also released developmental wrestler **Linda Miles** (a.k.a. **Shaniqua**), one of the co-champions of *Tough Enough III,* and **Lamont**, who briefly appeared as **Ernest "The Cat" Miller's** second.

Most of these cuts didn't come as any huge surprise, although the fact that 12 people were released within the span of about a week did. Looking at him physically, Test has all the makings of a main event talent. However, the Canadian lacked charisma and never established a strong identity during his six years with WWE, and that hurt his overall push. To make matters worse for him, he was recuperating from spinal surgery at the time of his release and couldn't have returned to action in WWE until mid-2005 at the earliest.

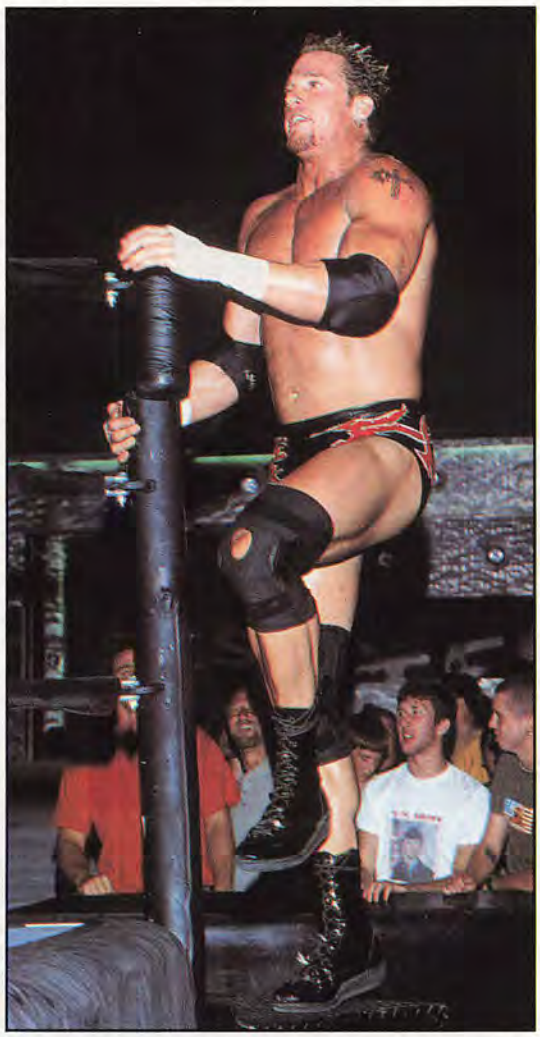
A-Train performed well and was well-liked during his five years with WWE, but he never developed into the monster heel that WWE hoped he'd become. His niche was feuding with young, up-and-coming fan favorites, and perhaps because of his lack of success against them over the years, his value dropped considerably.

Gunn, who had been with WWE for more than a decade before being cut, fell out of favor with management in the months prior to his release, but he had been very popular with higher-ups through most of his tenure with the company. If he doesn't show up in TNA soon, I wouldn't be shocked to see him brought back by WWE at some point, as either a wrestler or a backstage agent. Gunn received numerous main event pushes during his career, and the only time one worked was when he was one-half of **The New Age Outlaws** with **Road Dogg** (**B.G. James**) and a member of **DeGeneration X**. As a solo star, he was a flop.

Stamboli and Rico were receiving occasional matches on *Smackdown,* while Palumbo had been a *Sunday Night Heat* regular, but it's clear that WWE matchmakers didn't see much in any of them. Palumbo and Stamboli, who came to WWE courtesy of the WCW purchase, were buried deep within **The Full-Blooded Italians** gimmick for much of their stays. Rico was having fun as WWE's modern-day **Adrian Street** and making the persona work as best he could, but when **Jim Ross** left his position as vice president of talent relations, Rico reportedly lost one of his strongest supporters. Following an injury that sidelined him for a few months at the end of 2003, poor Rodney Mack couldn't even buy himself TV time.

As for the divas, the loss of Jazz will hurt WWE the most. Although **Trish Stratus** has come a long way since debuting with the promotion, Jazz is every much her equal inside the ring. She was the only diva who could be described as fierce, and now that she's no longer with the promotion, the women's division will be worse for her loss.

Despite being a co-champion of the first *Tough Enough,* Nidia's ring



Tough break for Test: He was one of 12 wrestlers released from WWE in November—and it'll still be the better part of a year before he's recovered from spinal surgery!

There was a lot going on backstage at Victory Road, but a lot of what happened inside the six-sided TNA ring was really good, including Petey Williams' successful defense of the X title against A.J. Styles.

skills never developed to the point at which WWE felt comfortable putting her into the regular match rotation. As for Kim, she had beauty and talent, but she simply couldn't overcome her character's lack of personality.

If reports out of OVW are any indication, Miles couldn't overcome her attitude. In the case of Lamont, some suggested he lasted only as long as he did because people in WWE forgot he was still under contract.

Taking a look around WWE's landscape, these cuts were bound to happen. Two of WWE's main revenue streams, pay-per-view sales and ticket sales, are at their lowest points in years, which made it hard to justify the promotion's large rosters. Gone for now are the days when **Vince McMahon** will spend money frivolously. He wants a return on his investment, and apparently he and those close to him didn't believe that these wrestlers were worth their contractual weight.

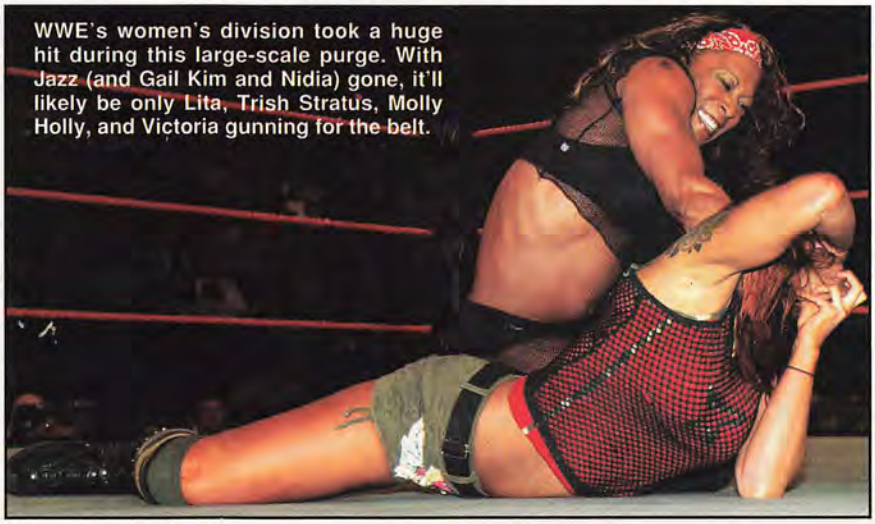
TNA's first Sunday night pay-per-view has come and gone, and we're glad to report that Victory Road looks like it was a success. It featured the appearances of just enough big-time wrestling personalities (**Kevin Nash**, **Scott Hall**, **Randy Savage**) to make it feel like an important event to those sampling a TNA PPV for the first time, and it also provided fans who are more knowledgeable about the product a few stellar matches.

Petey Williams defeated **A.J. Styles** to retain his X championship in one of the night's best matches, NWA champion **Jeff Jarrett** beat **Jeff Hardy** to retain his championship in what was a surprisingly good ladder match, and even the pay-per-view's opening 20-man gauntlet battle royal (won by **Hector Garza**) had fans raving afterward.

Interestingly enough, however, perhaps the biggest news to come out of Victory Road was something that occurred backstage and was never even mentioned during the broadcast: **Hulk Hogan's** arrival at the behest of **Bob Carter**, CEO of Panda Energy, the majority owner of TNA. Hogan's presence dealt a blow to a few egos (Savage's most particularly), and some TNA insiders are skeptical that he's once again using the promotion as leverage against WWE. Just the fact that he's once again considering wrestling for TNA shows how much in the game they actually are. (Remember, Hogan flirted with the promotion briefly in 2003 before a knee injury ended negotiations between the two sides.)

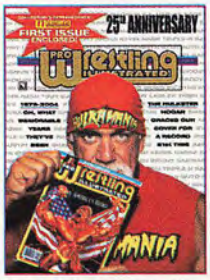
Of course, TNA being the new-and-improved WCW (at least politics-wise), things can't be completely cozy. Rumor has it that Panda Energy, the parent company of TNA, is tired of TNA running so deeply in the red. Because of this, there are a number of power plays reportedly in the works. Of course, those rumors will die quickly if the buy rate for Victory Road is as high as industry insiders are speculating.

Despite WWE's recent roster cuts, the promotion does continue to sign wrestlers to developmental deals. The promotion most recently added **Paul Burchill**, a wrestler out of Great Britain, and former ECW star **Chilly Willy**, who was wounded in Iraq while serving in the Army. Congrats to both men ... **Carlito Caribbean Cool** suffered a separated shoulder in a match with **Hardcore Holly** in early-November and is expected to miss about three months of action following surgery ... If you want to know how much pull **Bret Hart** has in Canada, all you need to know is this:



WWE's women's division took a huge hit during this large-scale purge. With Jazz (and Gail Kim and Nidia) gone, it'll likely be only Lita, Trish Stratus, Molly Holly, and Victoria gunning for the belt.

PWI TURNS 25!



Pro Wrestling Illustrated recently celebrated its 25th year as the sport's number-one publication in a very special way. Those who subscribe to *PWI* or spotted it at the newsstand in time got a treat. Not only did *PWI* produce a silver anniversary special, but as an added bonus, we polybagged a re-print of our very first issue, from 1979!

If you missed it, you won't have to wait 25 more years for a follow-up. A limited amount of both issues are still available!

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The largest Canadian television network recently named him as one of the 50 greatest Canadians of all-time … Take this for what you will, considering everything written earlier about the relationship between Hogan and TNA, but there's also a fun rumor floating that Hogan would like to team with his pop star daughter, **Brooke**, for a match against Vince and **Stephanie McMahon** at WrestleMania.

That does it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. □

Hulk Hogan is showing interest in TNA … haven't we heard that before? He created quite a buzz at Victory Road when he accepted an invitation to come watch the show in person.

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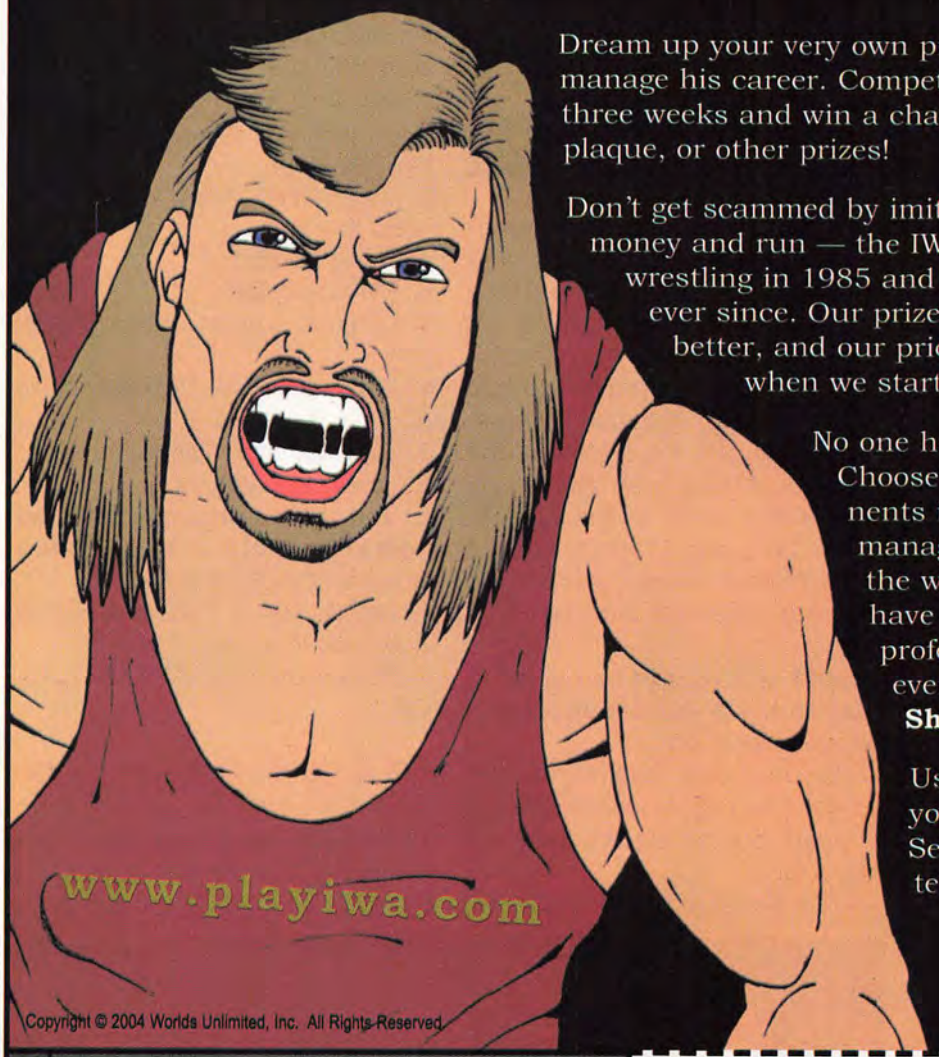

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WEAR-DOWN HOLDS

1. Airplane spin
2. Arm drag
3. Arm lock
4. Asian spike
5. Atomic drop
6. Bear hug
7. Bite
8. Body slam
9. Body tackle
10. Bulldog
11. Chicken wing
12. Choke slam
13. Claw
14. Clothesline
15. Cross body block
16. Double axehandle
17. Drop kick
18. Eagle split
19. Elbow smash
20. Eye gouge
21. Face rake
22. Fireman's carry ram
23. Flying body press
24. Flying clothesline
25. Flying drop kick
26. Flying elbow drop
27. Flying head butt
28. Flying mare
29. Forearm smash
30. Foreign object
31. Full nelson
32. Giant swing
33. Grapevine
34. Hair pull
35. Hammer lock
36. Head lock
37. Head stomp
38. Hip roll
39. Irish whip
40. Knee drop
41. Leg lock
42. Leg sweep
43. Manager interference
44. Monkey flip
45. Overhead toss
46. Pole ram
47. Reverse chin lock
48. Rolling scissors
49. Rope burn
50. Russian sickle
51. Savate kick
52. Scissors grip
53. Shoulder breaker
54. Slingshot
55. Snap mare
56. Step-over toe hold
57. Suplex
58. Surfboard
59. Turnbuckle smash
60. Wrist lock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch
62. Avalanche
63. Backbreaker
64. Backroll press
65. Belly to belly
66. Big splash
67. Boston crab
68. Brain buster
69. Camel clutch
70. Cobra clutch
71. Cradle
72. Crucifix
73. DDT
74. Figure four
75. Flying leg drop
76. Gourd buster
77. Hurricanrana
78. Moonsault
79. Neckbreaker
80. Piledriver
81. Power bomb
82. Power slam
83. Scorpion deathlock
84. Sleeper
85. Slingshot suplex
86. Spine buster
87. Stunner
88. Sunset flip
89. Superplex
90. Texas cloverleaf

YOUR NAME (PRINT NEATLY) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE _____

WRESTLER'S NAME (DO NOT USE ANY REAL PRO WRESTLER NAMES) _____

WEAR-DOWN HOLDS: *Choose 10 of the holds at the left numbered 1-60. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____ 10 _____

SET-UP HOLDS: *Choose 5 of the holds at the left numbered 61-90. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

FINISHING HOLD: *Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.* _____

in focus

By Dave Lenker

THE YEAR IN 10s

It just wouldn't be a year-end issue of "In Focus" without *your* top 10 lists, would it? Although there are still a few of you who miss the point and send me lists of either your top 10 favorite wrestlers or a list of the wrestlers you feel are the 10 best in the world (thanks, but no thanks), most of you get exactly what I want. Humor! Silliness! Outrageousness! Even a little nastiness is called for in this space—just a little. But only the best of the best make it onto the two pages of this, my favorite column of the year. You've done my work for me yet again this year, so here they are, the finest of your top 10s for the year 2004 ...

TOP 10 THINGS THAT TODAY'S WWE SUPERSTARS SHOULD NEVER DO

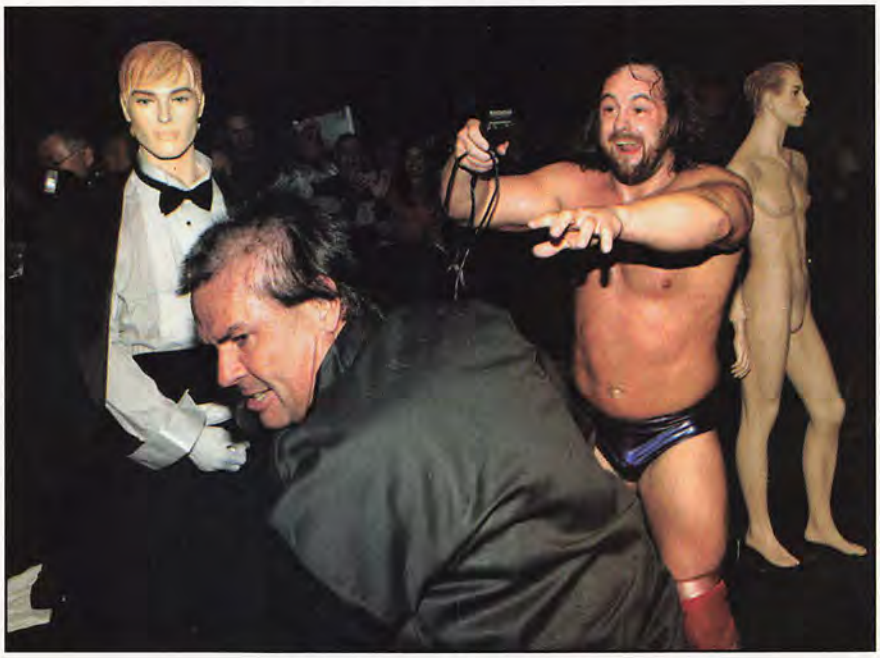
10. William Regal should never lose sight of his teapot. (Chris Jericho is still with Raw.)
9. The Big Show should never borrow Spike Dudley's tights. (It wouldn't work.)
8. Eugene should never take an algebra class.
7. Kurt Angle should never refer to Smackdown GM Theodore Long as "peanut head."
6. Ric Flair should never climb to the top rope again. (It's been like 31 years, and he hasn't jumped onto an opponent yet.)
5. Rey Misterio Jr. should never challenge Yao Ming to a game of one-on-one.
4. Eric Bischoff should never compete in a loser-gets-his-head-shaved match again. (He's 0-for-2, and besides, gray is not his color.)
3. Triple-H should never go into a Burger King, because if a customer requests extra pickles, the cook could try to grab his nose.
2. For the sake of his health, John Cena should never wear a New York Yankees jersey into the ring. (It could lead to choking.)
... and the number-one thing that today's WWE superstars should never do:
1. Batista should never turn fan favorite. (He might have a change of heart, but he will still have the same face.)
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

TOP 10 REJECTED NAMES FOR TNA'S SYNDICATED SHOW ON FOX SPORTS NET

10. *The Best Damn Jarrett Show Period!*
9. *Everything You Thought You Missed About The Old WCW But Now Realize You Really Didn't Because It Was All Really Pretty Bad* (rejected because it was just too darn long)
8. *Impact* (no, wait, they didn't reject that one ...)
7. *Carter Country*
6. *TNA Implosion*
5. *Orlando Championship Wrestling*
4. *We're Not Raw Or Smackdown (Or Velocity Or Heat)*
3. *Total Nonstop Attitude*
2. *Hillbilly Hootenanny*
... and the number-one rejected name for TNA's syndicated show on Fox Sports Net:
1. *Jeff & Jerry's Fabulous Friday Afternoon Funhouse*
—Edward Hammill, Crescent Lake, OR

TOP 10 SIGNS YOU NEED TO RETIRE FROM WRESTLING

10. It takes you 20 minutes to get to the ring from the entrance ramp.
9. You're on the talent roster along



Bischoff: no more hair matches!

with your son, grandson, and great grandson.

8. You stink up the locker room with Ben-Gay.

7. While the younger guys drink YJStinger before each match, you still prefer a good ol' fashioned glass of prune juice to energize you.

6. You've broken a hip while entering the ring.

5. You still recall your wild night with Mae Young in 1936.

4. Your opponent refuses to get into the ring with you unless you change your Depends.

3. Your career has spanned three centuries.

2. Your friends at the retirement home come to the arena to show their support on the night you challenge for the title.

... and the number-one sign you need to retire from wrestling:

1. Your name is Ric Flair or Dusty Rhodes.

—Ricky Gonzales, Toledo, OH

TOP 10 REAL REASONS WHY BROCK LESNAR WALKED AWAY FROM WWE

10. One year later, he was still loopy from botching that shooting star press so badly and smashing his head into the mat at WrestleMania XIX.

9. Needed time off to record his first rap CD.

8. Suddenly became incredibly bitter toward the business after spending all his spare time hanging out with Bruno Sammartino.

7. Sees big money in an eventual TNA showdown with Sonny Siaki.

6. He's actually the ultimate company man who realized WWE could make a lot more money by kicking him to the curb and giving JBL a run at the top.

5. Wanted more time to enjoy Sable's, *um,* home-cooked meals.

4. Heard Nicollette Sheridan spends a lot of time hanging around NFL locker rooms.

3. Thought he should get in football shape to prepare for the relaunch of the XFL.

2. Heard so many good things about wrestling on the independent circuit.

... and the number-one real reason why Brock Lesnar walked away from WWE:

1. Outright refused to be the main star in a risque lesbian storyline in which he would appear topless in front of a live crowd.

—John Franks, Anamoose, ND

TOP 10 REASONS WHY WWE SUPERSTARS DO NOT LIKE THE NEW YORK YANKEES

10. The Hurricane doesn't like the Yankees because they won't give his close friend/ace reporter, Gregory Helms, a press pass.

9. Mae Young doesn't like the Yankees because she can't get a date with Derek Jeter.

8. Booker T doesn't like the Yankees because they have been world champions 21 more times than he has.

7. Triple-H doesn't like the Yankees because when he goes to Yankee Stadium and looks up, his nose is mistaken for the foul pole.

6. Val Venis doesn't like the Yankees because they sell grilled foot-long hot dogs at Yankee Stadium, and he takes that personally.

5. JBL doesn't like the Yankees because he can't stand anyone who uses money to buy a championship.

4. Sable doesn't like the Yankees because they wouldn't sign Brock Lesnar, either.

3. Eric Bischoff doesn't like the Yankees because he's afraid he might have to join George Steinbrenner's "Kiss My Ass" club.

2. Mick Foley doesn't like the Yankees because their bats are not wrapped with barbed wire.

... and the number-one reason why WWE superstars do not like the New York Yankees:

1. All WWE referees do not like the Yankees because, based on their performance against the Boston Red Sox in the 2004 playoffs, they obviously allow choking.

—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

TOP 10 REASONS WHY JOHN BRADSHAW LAYFIELD IS WWE SMACKDOWN CHAMPION

10. He has compromising pictures of Vince McMahon.

9. He's next in line to marry Stephanie.

8. He's the member of The Mean Street Posse no one knew about.

7. Vince likes guys who can goose-step, and Baron Von Raschke is just too old now.

6. Putting the belt on a beer-swilling Texas redneck worked pretty well the first time, so why not give it another shot?

5. He's the only person who knows that Linda is actually a robot that Vince built in the basement of Titan Tower.

4. In exchange for the title, he promised to tell his Wall Street buddies to upgrade WWE stock to a "strong buy."

3. Vince has dyslexia and thought he was putting the belt on our 36th President, LBJ!

2. Triple-H needs to make sure he's the only WWE champion anyone wants to see.

... and the number-one reason why John Bradshaw Layfield is WWE Smackdown champion:

1. It's all part of a vast right-wing conspiracy!

—Steven Rossi, Astoria, NY □

JBL: champion for many reasons!

off the top rope

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:
TOP ROPE Box 1148 Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or send e-mail to: **offthetoprope@yahoo.com**

(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

I DON'T KNOW which is worse: seeing Bush get re-elected or having a urinal from the floor above unload its gold-colored booty onto my computer. Somehow, I think they're pretty much even, and I really don't want to mention another word about either one. The only conclusion that I am led to by both is that something around here stinks.

Speaking of unloading a bunch of crap on unsuspecting people, Kevin Nash and Scott Hall returned to pay-per-view. While I dug the whole NWO thing the first time I saw it last millennium, it's completely passe now. I find it hard to believe that yet another company thinks it can do bank with those has-beens. Sorry, but I'd rather watch A.J. Styles take a dump than see another long-winded shoot promo from Nash. Somehow, those two things are oddly connected.

Dear Dixie Carter (of TNA, not Designing Women*), please realize the error of your ways. Since you obviously need some help, here are a few clues about the business: The only thing good that has the name "Dutch" is cocoa, please tap into the educated mind of Christopher Daniels, learn the value of good talent, and don't believe everything you're told. If you need any more help, just call me. I'll be your personal champion.*

Dear Brandi

First of all, I think you guys do a great job every year on the "*PWI* 500." *PWI* is the top magazine out there for wrestling fans and workers the same. On to my question. What does it take to make it into the "500"? Do you guys have a formula that you work with or criteria? For me and a lot of other guys that don't make it into WWE, what does it take to make the list?

Keep up the good work!!

Sincerely,

"DANGEROUS" DONNY SIXX
dangerousdonnysixx@hotmail.com

Dear Donny,

Why is it so hard for everyone to read the introduction page of the "*PWI* 500"? We print that page for a reason, people! If you care to follow along, grab your December 2004 issue. Turn to page 20, read the entire page, and digest it. If you still don't understand why you're not in it, here's a valuable tip: Step outside of your little box of a career. Critique yourself, being brutally honest. Now, look at the list of independent wrestlers that are actually ranked. How do you really measure up against each one? Only the very best of the bunch make it, so you already have stiff competition. Think about it. This year, the breakdown of the list is as follows: 61 from

Why is Ring of Honor champion Samoa Joe ranked in the "*PWI* 500"? It's because he's been wrestling in main event matches alongside guys like Jushin Liger—who just happens to be one of the top wrestlers in New Japan Pro Wrestling.

the WWE, 40 from TNA, 55 from Japan, 28 from Mexico, 18 from OVW, and 298 from independent promotions. There are certainly more than 298 independent wrestlers in the world. Now, take into consideration all of the super indy wrestlers, like C.M. Punk, Samoa Joe, C.W. Anderson, American Dragon, and Spanky. These wrestlers compete around the world, but they're not the only ones who do so. Unfortunately, when we finish ranking all of the wrestlers who do compete all over the place, there are precious few spaces left for those who hold regional titles. After adding the perennial local favorites who top the lists of whatever promotion sent in their information, there isn't much room left for independent jabronis who barely make it into the mid-card.

My best suggestion is this: Worry about perfecting your craft and entertaining the crowd, no matter how small it may be. The fans are more important than feeding your own ego with press clippings. If you are truly worthy of notice, we'll notice you.

Dear Brandi,

Why won't any of the major wrestling companies in Japan actually leave Japan? Why do they bother adding "international" to all their title names if they *never* leave one country? How can a company called All-Japan have international titles, anyway, and if the Champion's Carnival is struggling, why not tour Australia or South Korea?

DEANGELO KELLOGG
jim88z@hotmail.com

Dear Oaf,

Why do independent promotions in North America insist on having a world champion? Many promotions refer to their heavyweight belt as a "world" title—which we always switch back to heavyweight since we only recognize the WWE titles as world belts. There have been several instances in recent years of Japanese titles being defended in America by the titleholders. Pro Wrestling NOAH, All-Japan, and Zero-One have all had their belts defended on American cards. That's enough for me.

Also, it's easy to say that the Japanese promotions should tour other countries to boost their companies. In today's economy and given strict travel regulations, it's expensive and difficult to put those plans into motion. Zero-One and New Japan have both experimented with the American independent scene and had mixed reviews. Hell, Zero-One's American offshoot, World-1, had exciting, competitive cards, but the American crowds just didn't get it. I just think the average doofus American fan is too stupid to appreciate a stronger style of combat.

Let's take a brief look as to why we cover the Super 8. In this photo alone, you can see TNA star Christopher Daniels, New Japan's Havana Pit Bulls—Ricky Reyes and Rocky Romero, Lucha legend Psicosis, and Shawn Daivari—who is better known to WWE fans as Khosrow Daivari. Name another tournament that can boast talent like this.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

Brandi,

What's your take on Samoa Joe? You know him...the Indy's #1 wrestler? The guy you never talk about because you seem to be a whore for EVERY Indy except RoH...or PWG.....or JAPW? You've always SEEMED like a great advocate for the Indy's. And, yes...I know....I had to choose between "Indy's" and "Indies". I made my choice. I'm sticking with it. But what's with the love for the Super 8, (which DOES rule), and you ignoring the East Coast promotions that are actually hot and successful?

MARSHA HEDGEPETH
staggolee@msn.com

PS. Seriously...the constant Gino references freakin' rule. I loved him.

Marsha,

You're so completely wrong on so many levels with your letter. First off, we are more than generous with our coverage of Ring of Honor and Samoa Joe. Our freelance photographers always send us great photos of ROH shows, so we always end up doing something on that promotion. When we don't have great photos—which is often the case—we still cover many of the promotions in our "Independent Roundup" section (located on page 22 of this issue). We also spread the indy love around, using the freshest material in whatever magazine we just happen to be working on that week. If you don't find a particular story in *PWI*, you'll find it in either *Inside Wrestling* or *The Wrestler*.

To belittle the Super 8 shows your stupidity. How can you criticize us for covering the annual tournament when even you admit that it "rules"? That tournament has made the careers of many of today's stars. Try to tune into a WWE or TNA show without seeing a former Super 8 competitor. It's damn hard to do.

I am an advocate for independent wrestling. It's where you'll find our future, as well as some of the best personal stories anywhere. I'm also an advocate for good wrestling, which is often hard to find on the indy level.

Now, on to your grammar lesson for today: Your choice of "Indy's" is wrong. An 's is a possessive characteristic or used as a contraction for the word "is." Since the indies neither own me nor "is" me, your choice is wrong. □

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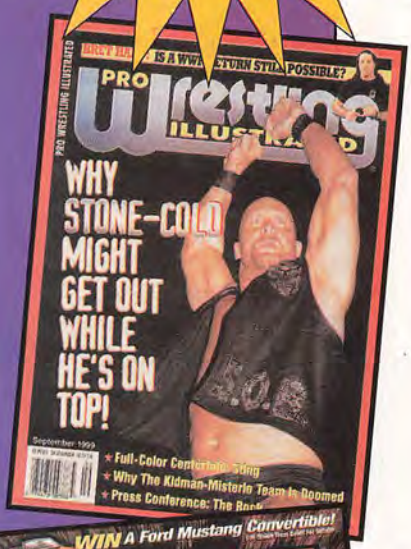

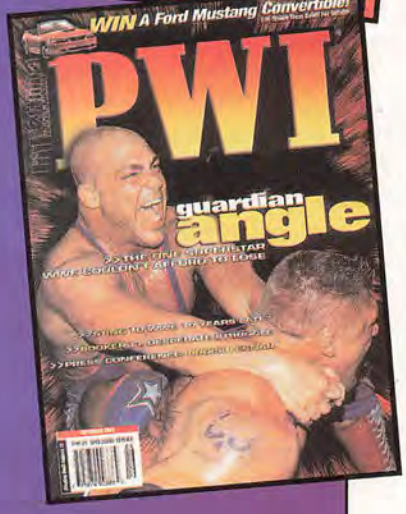

January 1990: Warrior's Next Victim: Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Ross, Midnight Express.

May 1990: Hulk Hogan: Primed And Ready For WrestleMania VI. Centerfold: Great Muta. Plus: Piper-Rude, Eric Embry, Rock 'n' Rolls, Sid Vicious, pain.

July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

October 1990: Sting's Painful Lesson: You'll Have No Friends At The Top. Centerfold: Brutus Beefcake. Plus: Orndorff-Blanchard, Tugboat, Teddy Long, Ultimate Warrior, Road Warriors.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter! Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

November 1991: Your Wedding Gift For Savage & Elizabeth: Help Lift The "Macho Man's" Suspension! Centerfold: Bobby Eaton. Plus: Tito Santana, Bushwhackers, Jushin Liger, Brian Pillman.

February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It Isn't That Unlikely. Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon. Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

May 1993: WrestleMania Without Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: The Undertaker. Plus: Ron Simmons, Cactus Jack, Madusa-Sherri, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life." Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus: Kroffat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century! Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 *PWI* Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Rocky Maivia. Plus: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

Holiday 1998: *PWI* 500. Eighth Annual Special.

March 1999: 1998—The Year In Wrestling. 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, predictions for 1999.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

June 1999: The *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mankind, Flair & Turner, VMac, Steiners, New Japan-UFO.

July 1999: Warning! This Team Will Self-Destruct In 15 Seconds! Centerfold: X-Pac. Plus: New Jack-Dudleys, Jesse James, Venis & Godfather, Sting-Bischoff-Flair.

August 1999: Supercards '99: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Super 8, Bam Bam Bigelow, Jerry Lawler, tag team wrestling.

September 1999: Why Stone-Cold Might Get Out While He's Still On Top! Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Kidman & Misterio, The Rock, Bret Hart, Taz-Sabu.

October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

Holiday 1999: *PWI* 500. Ninth Annual Special.

January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho! Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.
February 2000: The Master Manipulator! How Stone-Cold Controls The WWF. Centerfold: Kane. Plus: Paul Heyman, Hogan-Bret-Sting-Luger.
March 2000: 1999—The Year In Wrestling. 1999 In Review, Achievement '99 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, predictions for 2000.
April 2000: Stone-Cold vs. The Rock: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania! Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: Dallas Page, Goldberg-Vicious, more Unofficial awards.
May 2000: The Y2K *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Asya, ECW returnees.
June 2000: Just Wondering, Steph ... Is Triple-H Worth Your Billion-Dollar Inheritance? Centerfold: The Rock. Plus: Heyman-Van Dam, Vader, NWO.
July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home! Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.
August 2000: Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.
September 2000: Wrestle McMania! Why The Peace Can't Last. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.
October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstar The WWF Let Slip Away. Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.
November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis. Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?
December 2000: Head Hog! Does Undertaker Have Enough Gas In His Tank To Rumble To The Top? Centerfold: Dallas Page. Plus: Kurt Angle, Rikishi, Vampiro-Sting, Japan.

[FULL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH HOLIDAY 2000]

Holiday 2000 (116 Pages): *PWI* 500. Includes: The editors' views, a look back at 1991's top 25, Achievement 2000 ballot.
January 2001: Who Does He Really Hate? Someone Will Pay For Austin's Pain! Plus: Steven Richards, Justin Credible, Gordon Solie, Jeff Jarrett, Arn-Sid.
February 2001 (116 Pages): The State Of The Game. Includes: The states of the WWF, WCW, ECW, independents, international, the business, the art
March 2001: Hulk Hogan: WWF Fans Want Him Back! Plus: Mike Awesome, Rikishi, Jerry Lynn, Elix Skipper, Triple-H.
April 2001 (116 Pages): 2000—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2000 In Review, Achievement '00 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, predictions for 2001.
May 2001: The WrestleMania Curse! Will The Great One Ever Win The Big One? Plus: Vince McMahon, William Regal, Page & Nash, Ivory, Lance Storm, ECW.
June 2001 (116 Pages): The *PWI* Poll. Plus: Ric Flair, Chyna, Steve Austin.
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7039/10-04

independent roundup

By Liz Hunter

JAPANESE LEGEND **Jushin Liger** headlined Ring of Honor's "Weekend Of Thunder" in early-November. Liger defeated **"American Dragon" Bryan Danielson** on November 5 in Boston and then teamed with ROH champion **Samoa Joe** to defeated Danielson and **Low-Ki** on November 6 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. In Elizabeth, Liger pinned Danielson after a running power bomb. After the match, **The Rottweilers** attacked Danielson, but he was saved by Liger and Samoa Joe, which led to a streamer-filled celebration in the ring. These Northeast shows ended a week-long tour of America for Liger. Earlier in the week, he held training sessions at the Inoki Dojo in Los Angeles.

CWF promoter **Ernie Todd** was tapped to be the next president of the National Wrestling Alliance at the promotion's annual meeting this fall. Former President **Bill Behrens** had accepted a position as treasurer, but later resigned. Explained Behrens: "I said I'd be treasurer, but then I got home and realized I hate that job. I have enough trouble balancing my own checkbook. I did not want to be treasurer." ECCW promoter **Dave Republic** was named as a replacement ... In other NWA news, NWA Oklahoma has announced that it will no longer be an NWA affiliate and ceased operations in October ... Former wrestler **Romeo Bliss** (real name **Travis Sampson**) was a competitor on *Survivor: Vanuatu*. He was the sixth person voted off the island. Sampson competed regularly in NWA Wildside, Tennessee Championship Wrestling, and several other Southern independents before getting dropped on an island to fight for $1-million.

West Coast standout **Joey Ryan** announced his temporary retirement on November 13 at a Pro Wrestling Guerrilla show. Ryan is suffering from post-concussion syndrome, which resulted from injuries sustained during a recent "Ironman" match with **Super Dragon** ... Texas veteran **Khris Germany** has also announced his retirement. Germany held several tag team titles throughout his 10-year career ... **Arik Cannon** is out of action with a broken collarbone. He was injured while defending his IWA Mid-South heavyweight title against **Austin Aries** on October 21. The vacant title was then put up for grabs in a four-way match between **Petey Williams**, **A.J. Styles**, **Chris Sabin**, and **Christopher Daniels**—which Styles won. Styles didn't have long to enjoy his reign, as he was defeated for the title by **C.M. Punk** the following night ... **El Generico** won the Elite Wrestling Revolution's Elite 8 Tournament on November 6 in Quebec City, Quebec. He defeated **Hell Storm** in the finals ... The former **Gorgeous George** (of WCW fame) recently resurfaced in Texas' Professional Championship Wrestling.

Jushin Liger celebrates a successful tour of the U.S. with Ring of Honor champion Samoa Joe and "American Dragon" Bryan Danielson. Liger wrestled two matches against Danielson (one singles, one tag team), but ended up showing respect for his opponent on the second night.

She aligned herself with TV champ **Steve DeMarco**. On the same card, **Skandor Akbar** was presented with a Lifetime Achievement award from the promotion.

Here's one way to help control the booming population of **Doink the Clowns**: beat him in a loser-leaves-town-forever match. That's exactly what Doink hunter extraordinaire **Kit Karson** did on an XCW show in Denton, Texas. Karson nailed the circus goof with a pair of brass knuckles while referee **Ric Manning** wasn't looking and covered him for the win.

Quick title changes: WAM! Topeka, KS, November 14: **Craig Keesman** defeated light heavyweight champion **Payday Pionkowski** in a 30-minute "Ironman" match to win the title ... ***Ringside Wrestling Federation, Danville, IN, November 13:*** **Tiny Tim** pinned **Shawn Cook** to win the cruiserweight title ... ***AWA Supreme, Madison, IN, November 13:*** **Eric Draven** and **Spazz** beat tag champs **The Blackhearts** in a steel cage match to become the new champions ... ***Coastal Real Extreme Wrestling, Williamston, NC, November 13:*** **Adrian Whisper** and **Timber** defeated **Damien Wayne** and **Shane Falco** to become the new tag team champs ... ***Gateway Championship Wrestling, Cape Girardeau, MO, November 13:*** **Dingo** defeated heavyweight champion **Chaz Wesson** to win the title ... ***International Wrestling Cartel, Wilmerding, PA, November 13:*** **Mahoney** defeated **Shirley Doe** to win the heavyweight title ... ***NWA Virginia, Richmond, VA, November 13:*** **Mike Vaughn** defeated **Grail** to become the new NWA Virginia State junior heavyweight champion ... **Pharaoh**, **Prince Malik**, and **Shaka the Warrior** beat **Hubie Johnson**, **Mike Vaughn**, and **Donovan Torrez** to become new NWA Global six-man tag team champions ... **Frank Parker** and **Scotty Blaze** defeated **Preston Quinn** and **Malicious Murphy** to win the vacant NWA Virginia tag team title ... ***Pro Wrestling Guerrilla, Los Angeles, CA, November 13:*** **Super Dragon** beat heavyweight champion **Frankie Kazarian** to win the title ... ***PAH Wrestling, Punxsutawney, PA, November 12:*** **Bad Bubba Brewer** and **Sheik Abdul Hassan** defeated **Darkside** and **Powerhouse Hughes** for the vacant tag team title ... ***XCW, Denton, TX, November 12:*** **Gemini** and **Sidd Murder** defeated **Scott Phoenix** and **Drunk Adam** to become tag team champions ... ***New Age Wrestling Alliance, Dallas, TX, November 7:*** **Lenny Lane** defeated **Joseph** to become the new heavyweight champion ... ***Great Wrestling Federation, Boonton, NJ, November 6:*** **Erick Andretti** beat lightweight champion **Kasey Coresh** for the title ... **Chocolate Boy Wonder** beat heavyweight champion **J.C. Rage** for the title ... ***Texas Pro Wrestling Alliance, Garland, TX, November 6:*** **Slam Shady** won a fatal four-way to win the Americas title ... ***All Pro Wrestling, Bristol, TN, November 6:*** **Greg Rocker** defeated lightweight champ **Danny Gibson** to win the title ... **The Rowdy Boy** won a three-way match against **Mr. X** and **Da Gangsta** to win the U.S. title ... ***Georgia Championship Wrestling, Columbus, GA, November 6:*** **A.J. Steel** beat **Bull Buchanan** in a singles match to determine one-half of the Georgia tag team champions. After the bout, Steel selected **Damien Steele** as his partner. ... ***Intense Wrestling Inc., Cincinnati, OH, November 6:*** **Temujin** defeated **Charles Fonzworth III** to become the new heavyweight champion ... ***Maximum Championship Wrestling, Smyrna, DE, November 6:*** **Adam Ugly** and **James** beat **Massive Mike** and **Jimmy Dream** for the tag team title ... ***United Wrestling Federation, Dallas, TX, November 5:*** **Max Muscles** pinned heavyweight champion **Bryan Lewis** for the title ... ***NWA Championship Wrestling, Kingsport, TN, October 31:*** **Josh Cody** defeated Tri-State champ **Ryan Phoenix** for the title ... **Thorn** defeated **Ryan Phoenix** to win the TV title ... ***Chaotic Wrestling, Lowell, MA, October 29:*** **Tony Omega** pinned **Arch Kincaid** to win the vacant New England title ... **Brian Buffet** pinned **Tony Omega** to win the New England title ... ***IWA Mid-South, Highland, IN, October 23:*** **C.M. Punk** beat **A.J. Styles** to win the heavyweight title ... ***National Wrestling Alliance, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 17:*** **Jason Rumble** defeated NWA junior heavyweight champion **Jerrelle Clark** to win the title ... **Vid Vane** defeated NWA Canadian champ **Kerry Brown** to win the title ... **Spyder** defeated NWA National champ **Ricky Murdock** for the title. □

Hey, *Survivor* fans, does this guy look familiar? Here's *Survivor: Vanuatu* competitor Travis "Bubba" Sampson as we here at *PWI* remember him best: Romeo Bliss, TCW Tennessee champion.

the international report

By Mike Spillane

ZERO-ONE WRESTLER **Naohiro Hoshikawa** remained in a coma as of press time after sustaining repeated severe blows to his head during an October 17 cage match with **Tatsuhito Takaiwa**. Hoshikawa collapsed after being power-bombed from the top of the cage and then hit with a blistering lariat by Takaiwa. He sustained a hematoma of the brain and underwent emergency brain surgery that night to relieve the pressure.

Hoshikawa's injury is similar to those sustained by New Japan's **Masakazu Fukuda** in 2000 and *joshi* wrestler **Plum Mariko** in 1997, both of which resulted in death. In a twist of cruel irony, Hoshikawa had just returned to the ring 15 days earlier after taking several months off to rehabilitate a head injury. While doctors remain optimistic that Hoshikawa will not be paralyzed, it is almost certain that he will never wrestle again.

On the same tour, **Shinjiro Ohtani** suffered a broken right orbital bone during an NWA Intercontinental tag title defense in Tokyo when he was power-bombed through a table at ringside. Ohtani and partner **Takao Omori** had originally retained the title despite the injury, but the match was restarted and they eventually dropped the belts to **Masato Tanaka** and **Wataru Sakata**. It was recommended that Ohtani take at least a month off for the fracture to heal, but he refused, instead continuing to wrestle every night after the incident.

In less depressing news, **Ultimo Dragon** is no more. The fate of the masked cruiserweight is unclear, but for now, **Yoshihiro Asai** is abandoning the persona that brought him his greatest fame. In late-October, Dragon teamed with **Jushin Liger** and **Great Sasuke** for a dream trios match that ushered out the era of Ultimo. Their opponents were three of the four **Tiger Masks**—**Satoru Sayama** (original), **Koji Kanemoto** (third version), and the current version, **Tiger Mask IV**. Dragon was defeated by his hero, the original Tiger Mask, with a Tiger suplex of all things, and afterward, he announced that Ultimo Dragon was going away. Asai expects to return to action in WWE without his mask, but his new character is as of yet undecided.

This leaves the current trainees at Dragon's Toryumon facility in limbo. The current class of eight students has seen Toryumon and Dragon Gate separate, and then watched as Dragon folded the remaining Toryumon X. With Asai leaving for the United States again, these wrestlers have no promotion to call home.

Universo 2000 has regained the CMLL heavyweight title from **Mr. Niebla**, who enjoyed a healthy reign of more than a year. This came just weeks after Universo lost his mask in a four-way match with **Canek**, **Dr. Wagner Jr.**, and **Rayo de Jalisco** at Arena Mexico. Losing his mask obviously put Universo on a tear, because the week prior to his regaining the championship, he also won the Leyenda Azul Tournament, an event dedicated to the memory of **Blue Demon** (a similar tournament is also held annually in memory of **El Santo**).

Naohiro Hoshikawa (left) might never walk to the ring again after sustaining an injury to his brain. Just nine days after this cage bout with Ikuto Hidaka (below), Hoshikawa found himself in a coma after sustaining repeated blows to his head during another cage match.

Photos By Wayne McCarty

In other news from Mexico, Promociones ENESMA has started recruiting American independent talent to appear on its shows. The high-flying **M-Dogg 20**, as well as California standout **Jardi Frantz** and six wrestlers from CHIKARA debuted during the fall. ENESMA is a subsidiary of Sky TV, operated by **Marcos Medina**, and enjoys national television in Mexico that extends into some parts of the United States as well.

In Europe, big shows in Switzerland and Germany are having a hard time drawing the types of crowds that WWE does during every European tour. The Swiss Wrestling Federation recently presented a show featuring the likes of **"Diamond" Dallas Page** and **A.J. Styles**, but only managed to turn out a few hundred fans. The next month, German Stampede Wrestling flew in **Mick Foley** to headline its big annual event and couldn't come close to drawing the necessary 1,000 fans needed to break even. In England and Ireland, the crowds also aren't large, but they are consistent, with fans coming out to see American wrestlers like **Colt Cabana**, **Matt Striker**, **Xavier**, and **Lash LeRoux**, all of whom have just toured the countries. While small independent events manage to survive using mostly local talent, the climate doesn't seem right for a non-WWE European supershow at the moment.

Riki Choshu, who left New Japan Pro Wrestling a few years ago to start his own promotion, will already be back with the company by the time you read this. Choshu, who first retired in 1998, served as a matchmaker behind the scenes with New Japan for several years. When political tensions mounted, Choshu left the company to form World Japan Pro, an independent that starred his protege, **Kensuke Sasaki**, and other mid-level *puroresu* stars. However, WJ Pro, almost from the outset, proved to be a disastrous idea. The promotion never really found an audience and was all but dead within six months. New Japan, desperate for anything to spark interest amongst its dwindling fan base, hastily agreed to bring back Choshu, Sasaki, and others that it had dismissed at the outset of the new millennium. Sasaki has already captured the IWGP heavyweight title, making him an instant major player once again.

All-Japan Pro Wrestling, which has been limping along for several months, drew a big crowd for the first matchup featuring **Keiji Muto** and **Mitsuharu Misawa** as a team. They faced down Sasaki and his former tag team partner **Hiroshi Hase**, a part-time wrestler who spends most of his time on his political career. (Hase has been part of the Japanese Diet for years.) All-Japan and NOAH, the promotion formed by Misawa in 2000, have been at odds ever since NOAH was formed. Now that founder **Giant Baba's** widow, **Motoko**, is out of the picture in AJPW, political tensions between the groups have eased, paving the way for this dream match. Muto and Misawa defeated Hase and Sasaki following a moonsault press from Muto on Hase.

The other big match on this card saw **Toshiaki Kawada** retain the Triple Crown against **Taiyo Kea**, who literally stole the belts a few months ago, even though he never won them. Kawada got his revenge in pinning Kea and then stated his desire to face New Japan's **Hiroyoshi Tenzan**, who won this year's G1 Climax tournament. The two have never had a singles match, and it would be a huge event, regardless of which promotion hosted it. Virtually all of the New Japan/All-Japan crossover matches have been giant hits at the box office.

Are you looking for "Diamond" Dallas Page? Well, he stopped by Switzerland recently to thrill the local fans. Unfortunately, even star power like his can't entice many Euro fans to buy tickets to a non-WWE show.

NOAH's **Kenta Kobashi** just keeps on rolling. More than a year into his title reign as the company's Global Honored Crown champion, Kobashi is showing no signs of slowing down. After mowing down **Akira Taue** and **Jun Akiyama** in the summer months, Kobashi most recently defended against **Akitoshi Saito**. With the field of serious contenders all but exhausted, Misawa has said that he would consider facing Kobashi one more time. After their last singles confrontation, Misawa said that he would never face Kobashi in another singles bout. However, given Kobashi's dominance as champion, finding a credible challenger at this point might supercede Misawa's desire to stick to his promise. The group is also looking at booking title defenses for Kobashi in other countries, the foremost of which might be England, in which NOAH television airs on The Wrestling Channel. □

PWI official ratings

For period ended December 5, 2004

TOP 10

1. **TRIPLE-H**
   269, Greenwich, CT
   (1) WWE Raw champion
2. **KENTA KOBASHI**
   282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
   (2) GHC heavyweight champion
3. **JOHN B. LAYFIELD**
   306, Roscoe, TX
   (3) WWE Smackdown champion
4. **RANDY ORTON**
   265, St. Louis, MO
   (6) No. 1 contender: WWE Raw title
5. **JEFF JARRETT**
   230, Nashville, TN
   (9) NWA heavyweight champion
6. **TOSHIAKI KAWADA**
   245, Ashikaga, Japan
   (8) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
7. **BOOKER T**
   250, Houston, TX
   (-) No. 1 contender: WWE Smackdown title
8. **CHRIS BENOIT**
   224, Edmonton, Alberta
   (-) No. 2 contender: WWE Raw title
9. **THE UNDERTAKER**
   304, Dallas, TX
   (7) No. 2 contender: WWE Smackdown title
10. **SHELTON BENJAMIN**
    245, Spartanburg, SC
    (10) WWE Intercontinental champion

Triple-H

TAG TEAMS

1. **RENE DUPREE & KENZO SUZUKI**
   Combined weight: 516 pounds
   (1) WWE Smackdown tag team champions
2. **WILLIAM REGAL & EUGENE**
   Combined weight: 474 pounds
   (-) WWE Raw tag team champions
3. **KENDO KA SHIN & YUJI NAGATA**
   Combined weight: 423 pounds
   (8) All-Japan International tag team champions
4. **BOBBY RUDE & ERIC YOUNG**
   Combined weight: 450 pounds
   (9) NWA tag team champions
5. **MINORU SUZUKI & YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA**
   Combined weight: 514 pounds
   (2) IWGP International tag team champions
6. **ROBERT CONWAY & SYLVAN GRENIER**
   Combined weight: 475 pounds
   (4) No. 1 contenders: WWE Raw tag title
7. **REY MISTERIO JR. & ROB VAN DAM**
   Combined weight: 400 pounds
   (6) No. 1 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
8. **CHRIS HARRIS & JAMES STORM**
   Combined weight: 516 pounds
   (-) No. 1 contenders: NWA tag title
9. **MITSUHARU MISAWA & YOSHINARI OGAWA**
   Combined weight: 430 pounds
   (5) GHC tag team champions
10. **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
    Combined weight: 579 pounds
    (10) No. 2 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title

WWE RAW

Raw Champion:
TRIPLE-H
(C) 269, Greenwich, CT

1—**RANDY ORTON**
(2) 265, St. Louis, MO
2—**CHRIS BENOIT**
(6) 224, Edmonton, Alberta
3—**SHELTON BENJAMIN**
(3) 245, Spartanburg, SC
4—**EDGE**
(4) 240, Toronto, Ontario
5—**BATISTA**
(9) 318, Washington, DC
6—**CHRIS JERICHO**
(5) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
7—**GENE SNITSKY**
(7) 307, Nesquehoning, PA
8—**CHRISTIAN**
(8) 225, Toronto, Ontario
9—**MAVEN**
(-) 210, Chantilly, VA
10—**RHYNO**
(-) 275, Detroit, MI

WWE SMACKDOWN

Smackdown Champion:
JOHN B. LAYFIELD
(C) 306, Roscoe, TX

1—**BOOKER T**
(6) 250, Houston, TX
2—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(1) 304, Dallas, TX
3—**EDDIE GUERRERO**
(5) 223, El Paso, TX
4—**JOHN CENA**
(-) 260, West Newbury, MA
5—**KURT ANGLE**
(4) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
6—**THE BIG SHOW**
(3) 485, Aiken, SC
7—**SPIKE DUDLEY**
(7) 155, Providence, RI
8—**REY MISTERIO JR.**
(9) 163, San Diego, CA
9—**HEIDENREICH**
(-) 320, New Orleans, LA
10—**ROB VAN DAM**
(7) 237, Battle Creek, MI

OVW

OVW Champion:
CHRIS CAGE
(-) 220, Youngstown, OH

1—**TANK TOLAND**
(-) 220, Margate, NJ
2—**MATT MORGAN**
(C) 330, Fairfield, CT
3—**JOHNNY NITRO**
(2) 204, Los Angeles, CA
4—**JOHNNY JETER**
(1) 218, San Diego, CA
5—**CHRIS MASTERS**
(9) 270, Santa Monica, CA
6—**MATT CAPPOTELLI**
(4) 220, Norwich, NY
7—**KEN DOANE**
(6) 210, Louisville, KY
8—**JOEY MATTHEWS**
(5) 213, Fayetteville, NC
9—**SEVEN**
(3) 278, Memphis, TN
10—**SETH SKYFIRE**
(10) 224, Louisville, KY

RING OF HONOR

ROH Champion:
SAMOA JOE
(C) 270, American Samoa

1—**JOHN WALTERS**
(1) 220, Boston, MA
2—**C.M. PUNK**
(2) 220, Chicago, IL
3—**AUSTIN ARIES**
(4) 202, Milwaukee, WI
4—**HOMICIDE**
(5) 220, Brooklyn, NY
5—**LOW-KI**
(7) 170, Brooklyn, NY
6—**BRYAN DANIELSON**
(3) 185, Aberdeen, WA
7—**NIGEL McGUINNESS**
(8) 220, London, England
8—**JIMMY RAVE**
(-) 177, Atlanta, GA
9—**JAY LETHAL**
(-) 192, Elizabeth, NJ
10—**ALEX SHELLEY**
(6) 199, Detroit, MI

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

BAD 2 THE BONE WRESTLING: Champion—J.C. Bailey; **1**—Vic the Bruiser; **2**—Mason the Mangler; **3**—Simon Sezz; **4**—Billy Maverick; **5**—Randy Royal; **6**—K-Lo; **7**—Billy Black; **8**—Clint Marko; **9**—Mike Samples; **10**—K.C. Sabre.

CHIKARA: Champion—Larry Sweeney; **1**—Jigsaw; **2**—Jack Marciano; **3**—Eddie Kingston; **4**—Oriental; **5**—Mike Quackenbush; **6**—Skayde; **7**—Claudio Castagnoli; **8**—Hallowicked; **9**—Jolly Roger; **10**—Shane Storm.

FAR NORTH WRESTLING: Champion—T. Rantula; **1**—Mike Quackenbush; **2**—Dennis Gregory; **3**—Dorian Deville; **4**—Slyk Wagner Brown; **5**—Sterling James Keenan; **6**—Claudio Castagnoli; **7**—Kevin Grace; **8**—Lord Zoltan; **9**—Larry Sweeney; **10**—Leslie Leatherman.

KYDA PRO WRESTLING: Champion—C.A. Elliott; **1**—Tank Thomas; **2**—Snatch Haggis; **3**—Dan Severn; **4**—Shane McIntyer; **5**—Chris Nightmare; **6**—Chucky Wynn; **7**—Billy Johnson; **8**—Simply Luscious; **9**—John Kermon; **10**—Sean Patrick.

MAXIMUM CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Aken Pembrooke; **1**—Shaka; **2**—Sam Jones; **3**—Chris Nightmare; **4**—Massive Mike; **5**—Jimmy Dream; **6**—Brandon Mercury; **7**—E.L. Stanley; **8**—Adam Ugly; **9**—Kris Krude; **10**—Asian Sinsation.

MIDWEST POWERHOUSE WRESTLING: Champion—The Searcher; **1**—Damian Blade; **2**—Chico Es Loco; **3**—Scar; **4**—Curtis Payne; **5**—Christian Haze; **6**—Xavier Frost; **7**—Dan Walsh; **8**—Uriah; **9**—The Stud; **10**—Ivan Stroganov.

NWA VIRGINIA: Champion—The Barbarian; **1**—Preston Quinn; **2**—Phil Brown; **3**—Dirty Money; **4**—Scotty Blaze; **5**—Frank Parker; **6**—Hubie Johnson; **7**—Malicious Murphy; **8**—Donnie Dollars; **9**—Mike Vaughn; **10**—Rolling Thunder.

PRICE OF GLORY WRESTLING: Champion—Jack Thriller; **1**—Jayson Quick; **2**—Johnny Dynamo; **3**—BAM; **4**—C.J. Otis; **5**—Johnny Dollar; **6**—Rastakhan; **7**—Fabuzio; **8**—Hypknow; **9**—Noah Lott; **10**—Frank Stein.

PWF NORTHEAST: Champion—Jose Perez; **1**—Triplelicious; **2**—Jason Blade; **3**—Billy Black; **4**—Ebony Blade; **5**—Pat Masters; **6**—Evan Siks; **7**—Nick Logan; **8**—Kevin Karizma; **9**—Kyle Storm; **10**—Kid Mikaze.

WORLD OF HURT WRESTLING: Champion—Texas Outlaw; **1**—Brodie Lee; **2**—Danger; **3**—Jeff Starr; **4**—Chuck Deep; **5**—Bert Williams; **6**—Nick Neighborhood; **7**—Swinger Sidusky; **8**—Virus; **9**—Punk; **10**—Cheech.

WORLD XTREME WRESTLING: Champion—Sinister X; **1**—Jeff Coleman; **2**—Samu; **3**—Havoc; **4**—Sugaa; **5**—Cabbie; **6**—Boogalou; **7**—Tommy Suede; **8**—C.J. O'Doyle; **9**—Kris Chambers; **10**—Drew Blood.

WRESTLING REVOLUTIONS ENTERTAINMENT: Champion—Bonzz; **1**—Mike Valentine; **2**—Johnny Humphrey; **3**—Rocky Gilmore; **4**—John Deaton; **5**—Dodder Green; **6**—Josh La Rue; **7**—Brandon Groom; **8**—Tym-X; **9**—Kujo Li; **10**—Jimmy Candler.

NWA

NWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—JEFF HARDY
(1) 212, Cameron, NC
2—MONTY BROWN
(2) 268, Detroit, MI
3—RON KILLINGS
(-) 230, Charlotte, NC
4—SPYDER
(-) 225, New York, NY
5—VANCE NEVADA
(-) 223, Brandon, Manitoba
6—SCOOT ANDREWS
(-) 222, Tampa, FL
7—RAVEN
(3) 243, Short Hills, NJ
8—RICKY MURDOCH
(6) 261, Houston, TX
9—A.J. STYLES
(4) 202, Gainesville, GA
10—J.T. WOLFEN
(8) 297, New Haven, CT

TNA

NWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—PETEY WILLIAMS
(1) 180, Windsor, Ontario
2—MONTY BROWN
(4) 268, Detroit, MI
3—JEFF HARDY
(2) 212, Cameron, NC
4—A.J. STYLES
(3) 202, Gainesville, GA
5—CHRIS SABIN
(10) 207, Hell, MI
6—DALLAS PAGE
(-) 256, Point Pleasant, NJ
7—ABYSS
(6) 295, Cincinnati, OH
8—HECTOR GARZA
(-) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
9—RAVEN
(5) 243, Short Hills, NJ
10—FRANKIE KAZARIAN
(-) 220, Yucca Valley, CA

JAPAN

1—KENTA KOBASHI
(1) 282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
2—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(3) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
All-Japan Triple Crown champion
3—KENSUKE SASAKI
(2) 251, Tokyo, Japan
IWGP heavyweight champion
4—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(-) 270, Tokyo, Japan
5—MITSUHARU MISAWA
(10) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
6—HEAT
(4) 204, Tokyo, Japan
7—NAOMICHI MARUFUJI
(-) 202, Sapporo, Japan
8—TAIYO KEA
(9) 235, Honolulu, HI
9—MASA CHONO
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan
10—JUN AKIYAMA
(5) 225, Hiroshima, Japan

MEXICO

1—UNIVERSO DOS MIL
(-) 240, Mexico City, Mexico
2—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(2) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
3—ULTIMO GUERRERO
(3) 173, Mexico City, Mexico
4—L.A. PARK
(6) 235, Torreon, Mexico
5—LATIN LOVER
(8) 190, Monterrey, Mexico
6—SHOCKER
(7) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
7—HEAVY METAL
(5) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
8—REY BUCANERO
(-) 197, Mexico City, Mexico
9—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(2) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
10—DR. WAGNER JR.
(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

2004 The year in review

Section compiled by Dan Murphy

FOR AT LEAST a brief, shining moment, 2004 seemed to be the year pro wrestling got back to its roots.

Eddie Guerrero overcame a 75-pound weight disadvantage to upset the seemingly invincible Brock Lesnar and capture the Smackdown championship at No Way Out in February. Chris Benoit—a man long derided by critics for being too small and too bland to grab wrestling's top prize—beat both Triple-H and Shawn Michaels cleanly at WrestleMania, wrestling's grandest stage, and captured the Raw title.

Meanwhile, in TNA, the X division continued to heat up, and the promotion made the revolutionary move of replacing the traditional square ring with a six-sided version, ostensibly to give X division competitors even more launching points and more room to be creative. Ring of Honor introduced the pure wrestling title, which limited rope breaks and emphasized clean mat wrestling.

For those with an appreciation for the artistry of scientific wrestling, the first half of 2004 was an incredible time to be a fan.

But if the first six months of the year was a time for the technicians, the second half of the year was when the super heavyweights got their chance to shine.

John Bradshaw Layfield put down the six-pack, put on the 10-gallon hat, and became one of the least likely world champions in recent history. Gene Snitsky emerged from nowhere (actually, Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania) to become a dominant force on Raw, while the

2004 saw Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero reach their potential and silence their critics by winning the Raw and Smackdown championships, respectively. For years, WWE was seen as the land of the giants. When the 223-pound Guerrero and 224-pound Benoit claimed the top titles in the company, it was a clear repudiation of a maxim made famous by Gorilla Monsoon. It turns out a good small man can beat a good big man, and Benoit and Guerrero are two of the best in the business.

2004 saw Nick Dinsmore change his name, grow out his hair, and become Raw's breakout sensation as Eugene, Eric Bischoff's "special" nephew. Not only was Eugene wildly popular with the fans, but he was also tremendously successful in the ring, teaming with Chris Benoit and William Regal to beat Evolution in several matches. Perhaps the most satisfying moment of the year for Eugene came when he beat "Uncle Eric" and earned the right to shave Bischoff's head. WWE Raw champion Eugene? It's not as unthinkable as it might sound.

2004 saw the return of The Outsiders to the national stage. At Victory Road, Kevin Nash turned against Jeff Hardy and reunited with Scott Hall. Together, Hall and Nash joined forces with NWA champion Jeff Jarrett and dubbed themselves The Kings of Wrestling. Hall and Nash immediately made an impact, attacking A.J. Styles and Jeff Hardy and declaring they were out to do the same thing they did in WCW: take over the joint and dominate the competition.

2004 saw the strangest wrestling marriage since Chuck and Billy's "commitment ceremony." In a desperate and bizarre attempt to save her boyfriend, Matt Hardy, from Kane's wrath, Lita succumbed to Kane's sexual advances and later announced she was pregnant with Kane's baby. When Kane beat Hardy at SummerSlam, Lita was forced to marry "The Big Red Machine." But before we ever got to see the demon spawn of Kane, Lita suffered a miscarriage when the debuting Gene Snitsky accidentally pushed Kane into her. It wasn't the most believable storyline, but it was a minor ratings hit and kept people talking from June though the fall.

massive Heidenreich embarked upon a reign of terror on Smackdown. "The Alpha Male" Monty Brown began building up a Goldberg-like aura in TNA, and the seven-foot Matt Morgan ruled the roost in OVW for much of the year.

Perhaps more than any other year, 2004 featured more diverse styles of wrestling on a national stage than ever before.

That being said, the year closed on an ominous note. In early-November, WWE pared down its two rosters with a series of cuts, leaving such competitors as Rico, Billy Gunn, Gail Kim, and Jazz searching for work. The cuts filtered down to the developmental level as well, as Linda Miles and Lamont were also released. As the year came to a close, almost every wrestler with a WWE contract was sleeping fitfully, hoping he wouldn't be the next one to be handed a pink slip.

Conceding to financial pressure, TNA abandoned its weekly pay-per-view format and began to tape a weekly Fox Sports Net show, *Impact,* in Orlando, Florida. For the promotion's big Victory Road pay-per-view (its first three-hour, Sunday night event) in November, TNA brought in Scott Hall, Kevin Nash, Roddy Piper, and Randy Savage. Will using big-name veteran talent help TNA become a profitable organization and perhaps develop into real competition for WWE? The answer to that question will decide the fate of the company.

As we head into 2005, the wrestling world will be looking for answers to several questions vital to the future of the sport. Does Randy Orton have what it takes to take Triple-H's title and become the flag-bearer for Raw? Who will emerge as the top dog on Smackdown: John Cena, Booker T, Rob Van Dam, or Eddie Guerrero (or will JBL continue to dominate)? Can TNA survive another year? Will Ring of Honor continue to expand its fan base, perhaps to even more of a national audience?

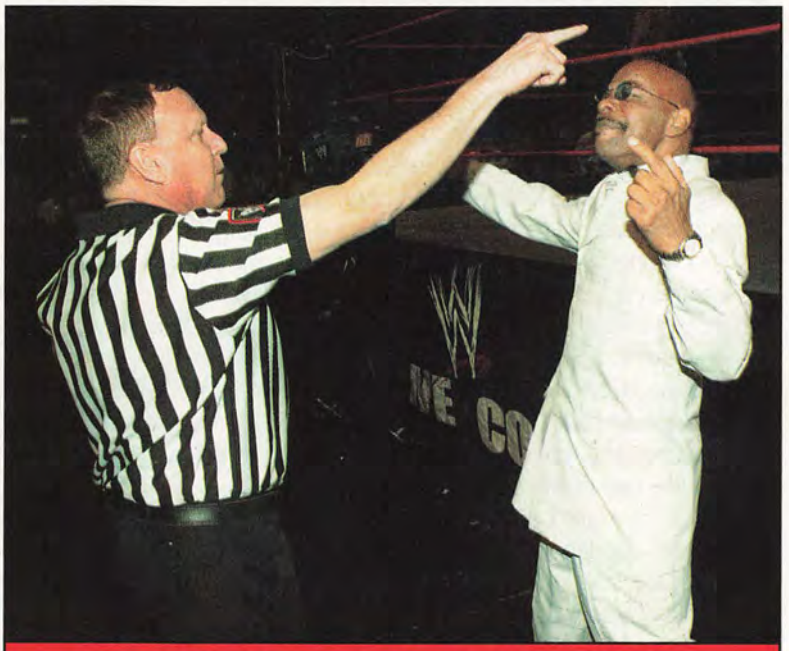
The future is impossible to foresee, but it'll be fun to watch. Stay tuned!

"JEEZ, BATISTA! AT LEAST WARN ME BEFORE YOU KISS ME NEXT TIME"

NOT EVEN VICTORY CAN DISTRACT RANDY ORTON FROM HIS TRUE PASSION—BIRD WATCHING

Batista was all smiles when Evolution defeated the reunited Rock 'n' Sock Connection at WrestleMania XX, while Ric Flair looked positively exhausted. As for Orton, he was either thanking his lucky stars or checking the JumboTron for a replay. Maybe he was checking the rafters in case Sting was lurking somewhere up there.

RAVEN ... ALL DRESSED UP FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

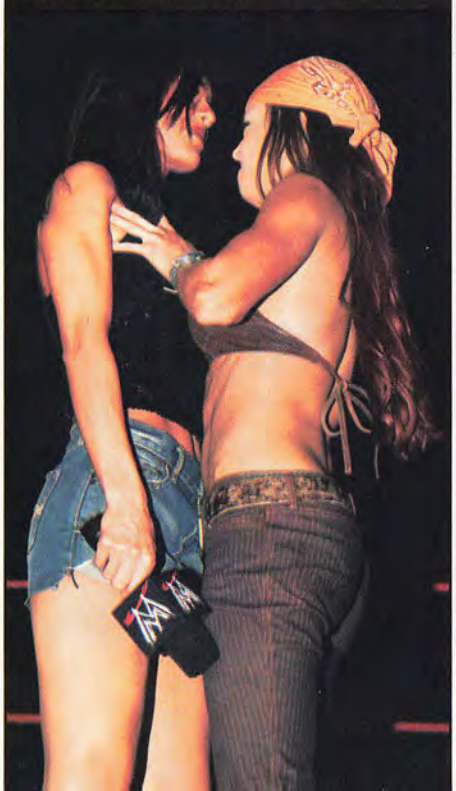


"NO, MR. LONG, I BELIEVE THAT MAN OVER THERE IS EVEN MORE CAUCASIAN THAN I AM"

WE'RE NOT SAYING CHRISTY DIDN'T ENJOY HER LITTLE MAKEOUT SESSION WITH EUGENE. WE'RE JUST SAYING THAT AFTER SHE WAS FINISHED WITH HIM, SHE HAD A BRAND NEW APPRECIATION FOR THE FAIRER SEX

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN I'M THE CHAMP?"

Chavo Guerrero Sr.'s cruiserweight title run surprised a lot of people, including Chavo Classic himself. Even though Chavo's best days as a wrestler were almost two decades behind him, he made an entertaining—and surprisingly effective—champion. Unfortunately, Classic let his success go to his head and was released from WWE after missing several house shows and reportedly balking at proposed storylines.



EVOLUTION REACTS TO YET ANOTHER INTERMINABLE JONATHAN COACHMAN DIVA SEARCH SEGMENT

"DON'T WORRY, KID. IF THIS WRESTLING THING DOESN'T WORK OUT, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FIND WORK MODELING HATS ... VERY LARGE HATS"

JBL'S INSURANCE PREMIUMS INCREASED IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HIS SUCCESS IN THE RING

Poor JBL. It seemed like every time he brought his fancy, long-horned limo into an arena, either Eddie Guerrero or The Undertaker wound up trashing it. Do you have any idea how hard it is to get bloodstains off a white hood? It's enough to make a grown man cry!

"HEY, BILL, SERIOUSLY, HOW CAN YOU NOT LOVE THIS BUSINESS?"

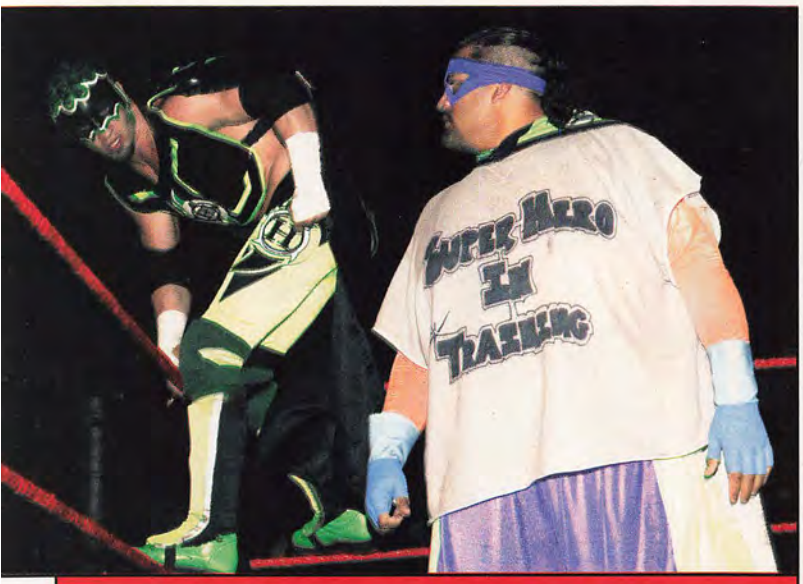
Booker T and Bill Goldberg seem to be sharing a sincere moment during an impromptu post-*Raw* beer bash. Maybe the former WCW World champions are just happy they escaped that sinking ship and landed lucrative WWE contracts. Or maybe not. Goldberg decided not to re-sign with WWE following the expiration of his one-year deal after WrestleMania XX.

"NA-NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA, HEY, HEY, HEY ... GOODBYE!"

The interbrand WrestleMania clash between Bill Goldberg and Brock Lesnar was billed as a battle between two of wrestling's most dominant physical specimens. It turned out to be the swan song for two guys whose hearts just weren't in wrestling anymore. Goldberg left WWE to pursue acting jobs and occasionally compete in Japan, while Lesnar left to try his hand in the NFL. The Madison Square Garden fans heckled both wrestlers throughout the match, and only came alive when guest referee Steve Austin took both of them out with stunners.

CHAMPION CHECKLIST: TITLE BELT? CHECK. SNAZZY SUIT? CHECK. DAZZLING ARM CANDY? *UMMMMMM*... WE'LL GIVE HIM PARTIAL CREDIT

GOOD THING JAZZ' BACK IS TURNED ON RODNEY MACK'S AWFUL ATTEMPT AT A RIC FLAIR STRUT. IF SHE SAW THIS, SHE PROBABLY WOULDA SLAPPED HIM BACK TO OVW

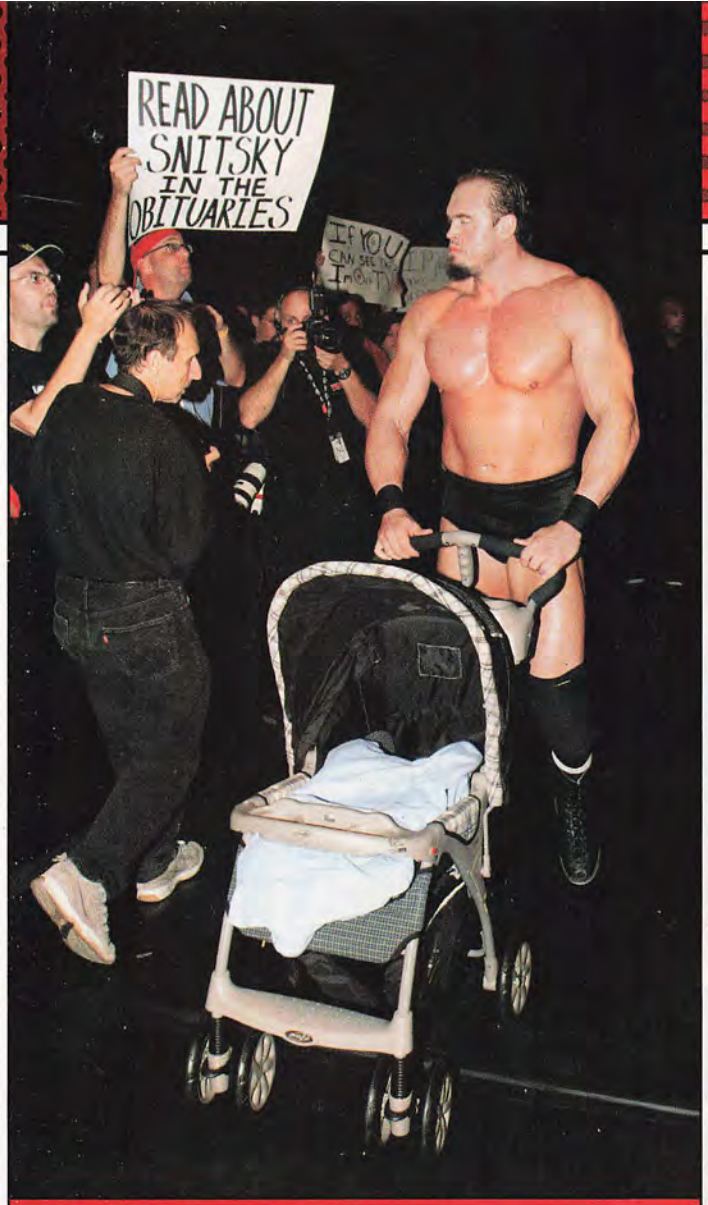


"I SMELL BURRITOS, *WHATSUPWIDDAT?*"
Rosey finally completed his "superhero training," but none of that training seemed to help—especially with his super-sized diet. Hurricane and Rosey struggled for much of the year, with Hurricane getting increasingly frustrated with each passing week. What are the odds Rosey will undergo super*villain* training in '05?

SONJAY DUTT IS ALWAYS HAPPY TO HELP KAZARIAN WITH HIS STRETCHING ROUTINE. SOMETIMES, A LITTLE *TOO* HAPPY FOR KAZARIAN'S LIKING

BLINDED BY THE BRIGHTNESS OF DON WEST'S SHIRT, KID KASH OPTS TO COVER HIS EYES WITH HIS HAIR AND TAKE HIS CHANCES WRESTLING BLIND

HEY, THERE'S THE GUY THAT GAVE DUSTY RICKETS!



THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE
Gene Snitsky went from claiming Lita's miscarriage wasn't his fault to promising to "kill Kane like I killed your baby." Snitsky may still be pretty green in the ring, but he proved he was a master of psychological warfare when he taunted Kane by bringing out this baby stroller. Still, the fan with the sign seemed to think Kane would get his revenge.

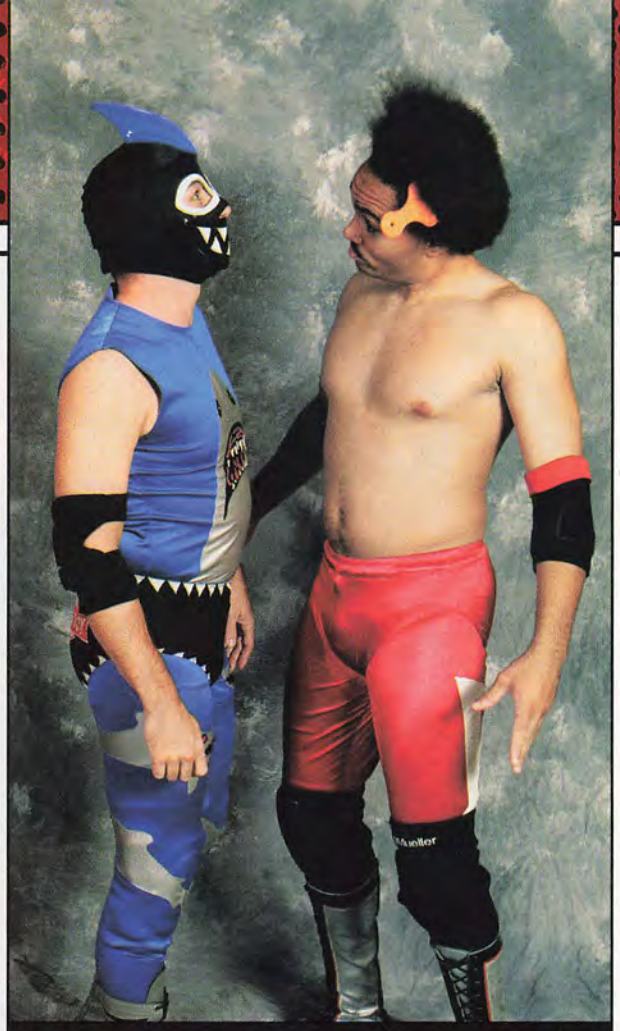
Photo by Paul Drinkwater/NBC

APPARENTLY KATHY GRIFFITH, DAVID ARQUETTE, AND GARY COLEMAN WERE ALREADY BOOKED
How would you feel if you landed tickets to *The Tonight Show* expecting to see A-list celebrities like Tom Cruise, Halle Berry, or Britney Spears, and ended up with Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah? Wonder if Mae is telling Jay Leno about the time she gave birth to a hand on national TV …

APRIL HUNTER GOT A HECK OF A DEAL ON THE SNAKESKIN SCARF … BUT SHE WAS IN FOR A SURPRISE

***HMMMMMM,* WHERE'S THE FOCAL POINT?**
We weren't sure if we could run this photo, since Desire's face isn't quite in focus. Oh, you didn't notice it was out of focus? Oh, you didn't notice she *had* a face? Come on now, her face is right there, right above her … oh, never mind!

NOTE TO THE GUY IN THE SUIT: WE KNOW TORRIE'S GOT A HECK OF A BUTT, BUT COULD YOU AT LEAST TRY TO BE SUBTLE? JEEZ!



"HOW ABOUT WE CALL OURSELVES SPONGEHEAD SHARKPANTS?"

It was no surprise that Shark Boy and the perpetually confused D-Ray 3000 became one of TNA's most popular tag teams this year. What was a surprise, however, was that they actually had a decent amount of success and became one the promotion's top duos for a while.

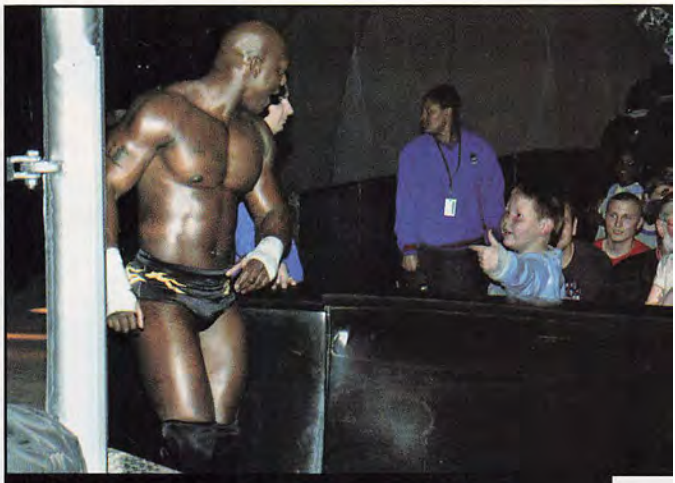
MIKEY BATTS AND JERRELLE CLARK LEARN THAT SOMETIMES WINNING CAN BE JUST AS PAINFUL AS LOSING

Clark and Batts took plenty of lumps this year, but due to the instability of the TNA tag team division, they came close to winning the NWA tag title on more than one occasion. Of course, they took more than their share of beatings as well.

"HEY, HEYMAN, DON'T YOU OWE ME MONEY?"

AH, JAPAN. HOME OF STIFF, STRONG-STYLE, GIMMICK-FREE WRESTLING

Yeah, right. While Japanese *puroresu* might put a little more emphasis on tradition and athleticism than American sports entertainment, you can always find a little American-style wackiness in the Land of the Rising Sun. Here, Aniki tries to pry out Hirotaka's eyeball with an umbrella during a Zero-One card.



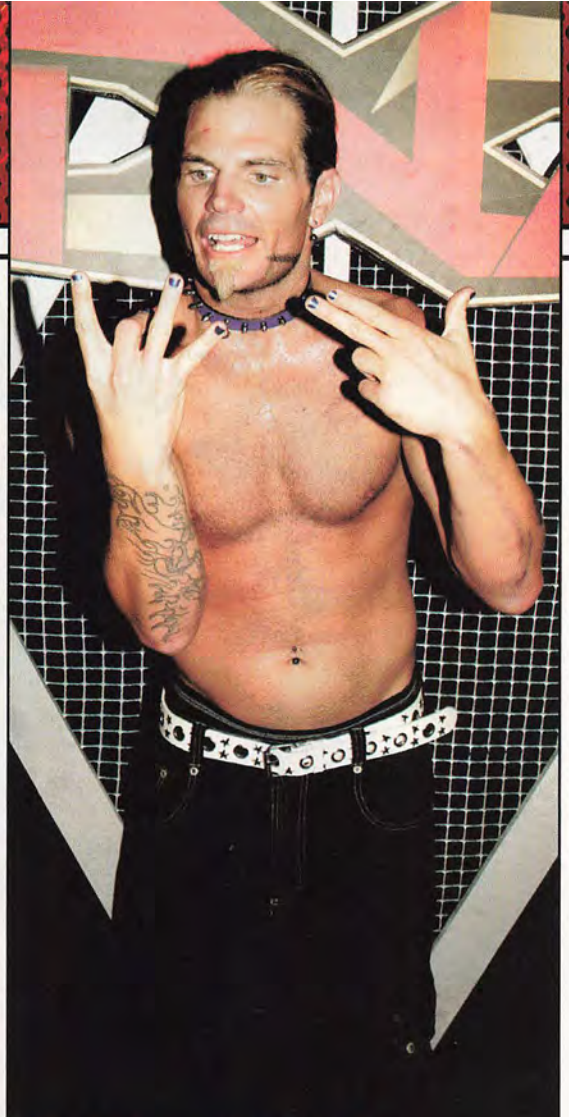
ORLANDO JORDAN GREETS HIS FAN CLUB

WARNING: THE SURGEON GENERAL HAS DETERMINED THAT BEING ANYWHERE NEAR THIS MATCH COULD BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

"I WAS JUST TUCKING IN MY SHIRT, I SWEAR!"

Either our photographer caught Dusty Rhodes in a compromising position with this shot, or "The American Dream" is doing his best Eugene impression. And this is the man the fans wanted to be TNA's director of authority?

A TOE CLAW! IT'S A WONDER FRITZ VON ERICH, BARON VON RASCHKE, AND BLACKJACK MULLIGAN NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT ... OR MAYBE NOT



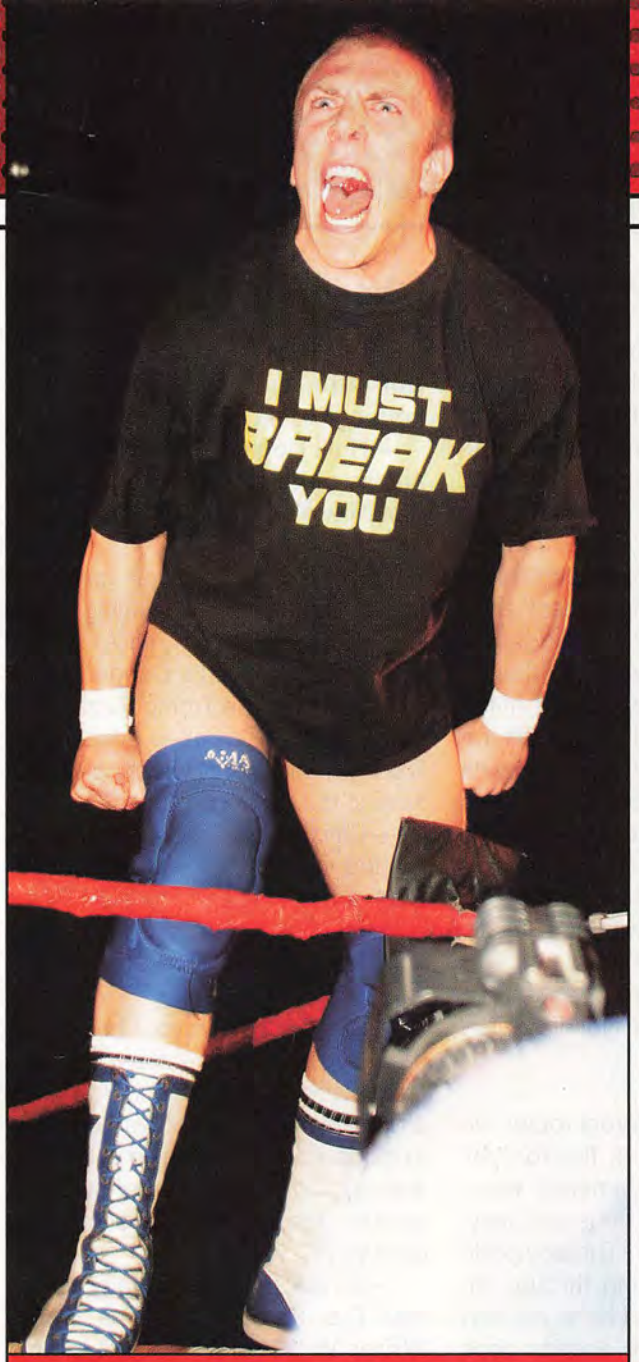
AND THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT *WEE-WEE-WEE* ALL THE WAY HOME

Actually, Jeff Hardy is counting all the ways TNA management has misused him since his arrival. He'd better start using his toes too.

"HEY, SHELTON, IF WE'RE GOING TO BE A TEAM, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO START SPEAKING UP"

Chris Jericho and Shelton Benjamin were two dominant Intercontinental champions, but they also made for an extremely effective tag team on the rare occasions when they teamed up—communication barriers notwithstanding.

"OKAY, CORDERAS. YOU GET RID OF THAT LAST BIT OF HAIR AND WE'LL LET YOU BECOME AN HONORARY BASHAM TOO"

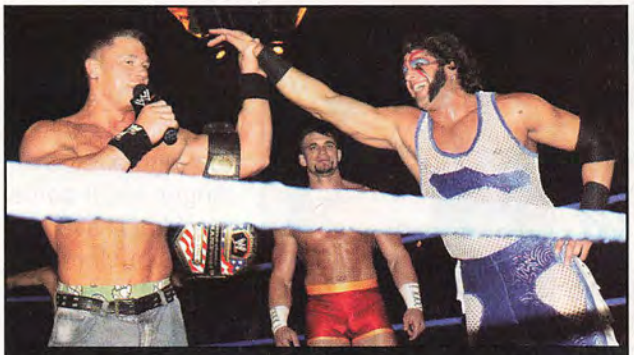


"AMERICAN DRAGON" BRYAN DANIELSON ABSOLUTELY HATES PICTURE DAY

CONJURES UP IMAGES OF LOU THESZ AND BRUNO SAMMARTINO, DOESN'T IT?

C.M. PUNK HATES IT WHEN HE DOESN'T GET JULIO DINERO'S ONE-LINERS

Or maybe Punk was second-guessing The Gathering's decision to sign with Jim "The Sinister Minister" Mitchell after turning their back on Raven. Maybe those misgivings were warranted. Shortly after signing with Mitchell, both Punk and Dinero disappeared from TNA.



RICO DECLARES A TICKLE WAR ON JOHN CENA

2004 PWI Achievement: Quotables

"I've been asked to run five times, but when you read [*To Be The Man,* his autobiography] you'll know why I can't. Too many skeletons in the closet, brother."

—Ric Flair, revealing his motivation in declining opportunities to run for North Carolina governor, *USA Weekend*

"Every few weeks, we're allowed to drive into Kuwait and buy supplies. We load up on *PWI* and *Maxim.* That's our link to back home."

—Sgt. Mike Strasser, explaining why certain magazines are a welcome sight in Iraq, "The Straight Shooter," *PWI,* May 2004

"I had deep reservations about the movie when I went to Vancouver because it is such a departure from my father's real-life story, but The Rock helped change my mind about it. He was so impressive and respectful of my father's memory. He won me over."

—Dwana Pusser Garrison, describing how meeting The Rock on the set of *Walking Tall* convinced her that the remake of the movie based on her father's life was a worthy project, "Win, Lose, Or Draw," *PWI,* June 2004

"Wrestling is my priority, but I'm being realistic about [my] career, about injuries, about all the things that go along with this industry. Also, for me, I've been on the show *[Raw],* featured a lot. It wouldn't be a bad thing for me to be gone for a little bit. Not that I want to. It's hard for me. It's a really tough decision for me."

—Triple-H, reassuring his critics that his film career might prevent him from being Raw champion for life, wwe.com

"It's my dream come true, more than my dream actually. I know all things are possible now. Even though this was a dream of mine, sometimes I wondered if it was too farfetched. You want to grab all your dreams with all your heart, but sometimes they seem so far away that you can't ... Who'd ever expect a Chicano, 5'9" and 220 pounds, to win the [Smackdown] championship?"

—Eddie Guerrero, basking in his title victory after No Way Out, wwe.com

"There are two different routes we have traveled. One is the football route and one is the amateur wrestling route. What we do is not easy. The travel's not easy. The physicality is not easy, working through injuries is not easy, and what you find is the guys who have already done that through amateur wrestling or football, they know what that's like ... We always look for athletes that are extroverted and charismatic. This ain't ballet."

—Jim Ross, educating the mainstream media on what it takes to be a pro wrestler, *The New York Times*

"When you put stage makeup on these young kids, she's perceived as being older, so we have these 22-year-old guys calling ... I tell them, '[Brooke's] not old enough to date yet. Yes, you're 22, yes, you have a nice Corvette, but she's 15! There's nothing to talk about!'"

—Hulk Hogan, talking about the pitfalls of being a pop diva's papa, *The New York Daily News*

"Hey, it was better than me going to that dark, dank, suffocating basement that you call an office. Everybody says Stu Hart's Dungeon was bad, but it was the Trump Plaza compared to your so-called editorial offices. Tell me, do all wrestling writers have to burrow underground?"

—Chris Jericho, explaining why he wanted to be interviewed at a Philadelphia hotel instead of inside *PWI's* editorial offices, "Press Conference," *PWI,* July 2004

"Look at you, with your hat turned backward and those tattoos. This is a respectable establishment! You can't afford anything in here! I'm not going to stoop so low as to help a fan out, anyway. Go on the Internet and look up cubic zirconia. You can afford that, can't you?"

—ECWA manager/jewelry salesman E.S. Easton, mistaking Senior Writer Will Welsh for a "typical" wrestling fan, "No Holds Barred," *The Wrestler/Inside Wrestling,* Volume 1, 2004

Photo by Michael Cairns

"Overused, they're tired. They want peace. Mine are just aggravated ... Angry vocal cords are what I have."

—Jim Cornette, admitting doctors had diagnosed him with vocal cords twice the normal size, wwe.com

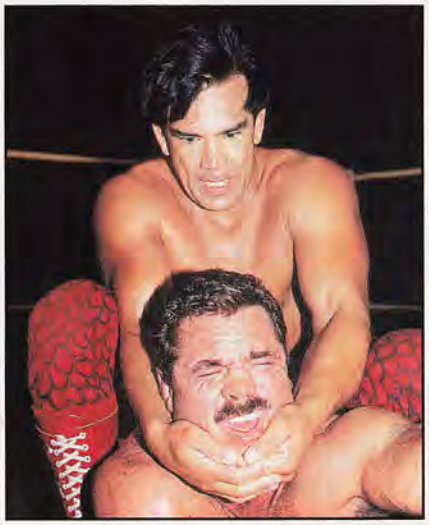
"Everybody has a different viewpoint on [weekly pay-per-views]. I know if we would have started at local affiliates, it's been done, and it's very hard to springboard off that. If somebody walked up and had given us a prime time time slot, I think it would've been a blessing and a curse. We would have went national immediately, but also went through all the growing pains on a national stage."

—Jeff Jarrett, refusing to concede that weekly TNA pay-per-views were a bad idea, the *Miami Herald*

"I've never fought Hulk Hogan, and that would be another blockbuster match. I don't know if it will ever happen, but I've got a lot of respect for that guy's longevity, charisma, and the career he's had. He's one of the guys who brought wrestling to a new level of popularity. If Hogan came back, he'd still be hot, although whether he'd be a big draw or not remains to be seen."

—Steve Austin, expressing his desire to face "The Immortal One," the *Online Sun*

"One time, a wrestler walked up to me and said, 'Steamboat, you're the common denominator.



I've always had my best matches with you.' Flair told me the same. Lex Luger also walked up to me and said it. So did Jake 'The Snake' Roberts, Don Muraco, and the Brisco brothers. I always seemed to be that 'other' guy."

—Rick Steamboat, pinpointing the number-one reason why he will be remembered as one of the greatest wrestlers ever, "Q & A," *The Wrestler/Inside Wrestling,* Volume 1, 2004

"For those of you fat, out-of-shape Internet wannabes who have never done anything more athletic than play checkers, kiss my ass for doubting me."

—John Bradshaw Layfield, encouraging even more JBL haters, wwe.com

"I'm lucky to be alive. If it wasn't for my thick skull, I wouldn't be here."

—Brock Lesnar, talking about the incident in which his motorcycle collided with a van, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"There were folks doing it and others who didn't. That happened a long time ago. And, shoot, I don't remember the particulars because I was on pain pills and Heineken."

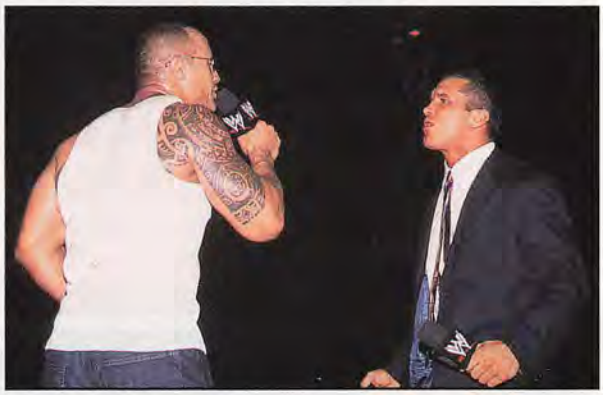
—Bob Orton Jr., commenting on the stories of rampant alcohol and drug abuse in the WWF during the 1980s, "Q & A," *The Wrestler/Inside Warestling,* Volume 2, 2005

"I've been with a lot of big women, but never with little men. It's going to be a new and exciting experience for me."

—Tom Arnold, referring to his gig in which he would referee a hardcore match between midgets for a TNA *Best Damn Sports Show Period* special on Fox Sports Net, TNA press release

"He plans to vote for John Kerry. But he doesn't want to subject himself to the tender mercies of the Minnesota press."

—Former Maine Governor Angus King, explaining why Jesse Ventura refused to speak although he was supposedly endorsing Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, Minnesota State Capitol press conference



"A couple of years ago, I would have said there's no way I should be compared to [The Rock]. As time goes on and I become more successful, as fast I have, I love the compliment, and I believe it."

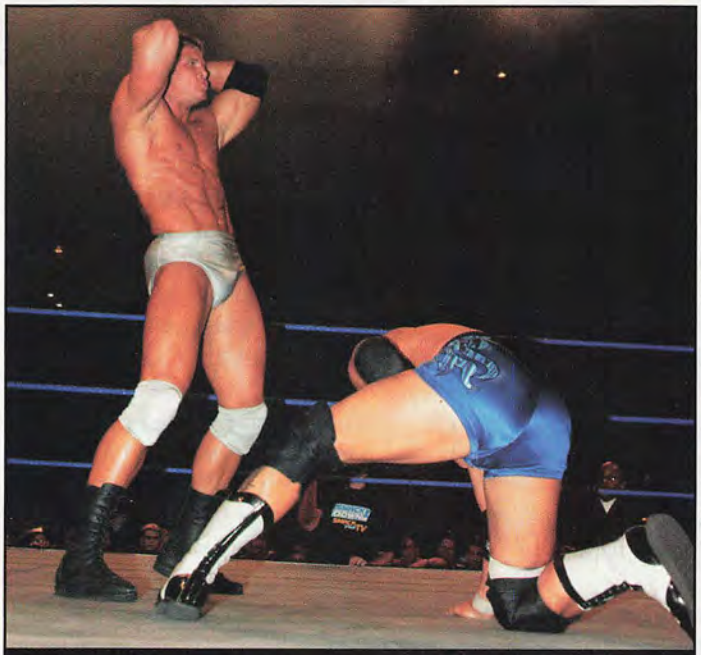
—Randy Orton, providing an honest assessment with a dose of Orton smugness, *St. Louis Today*

"This message was paid for by the people who watch *60 Minutes*—most of whom are smart enough to vote or they wouldn't be watching *60 Minutes.* They'd be home watching wrestling on television."

—Andy Rooney, giving his opinion of wrestling fans, most of whom would probably be smart enough to know computer-generated forged documents when they saw them, *60 Minutes*

OH, HE CAN SEE YOU ALL RIGHT
John Cena took particular delight in taunting then-Smackdown General Manager Kurt Angle while Angle was confined to a wheelchair. Angle got the last laugh when he stripped Cena of the U.S. heavyweight title, abruptly halting Cena's momentum and keeping one of Smackdown's most popular wrestlers out of the World title picture. Advantage Angle. It's true.

FREAK OUT! FREAK OUT!
THE MACHO STRIKER IS RUNNING WILD!
3PW's Striker had a bit of an identity crisis this year as he began impersonating some of wrestling's most distinctive personalities. Randy Savage, The Sandman, The Bushwhackers, Roddy Piper, and many others were victims of Striker's satire. We all knew Striker could show some personality if he tried, but who could have guessed he had so many personalities in him?

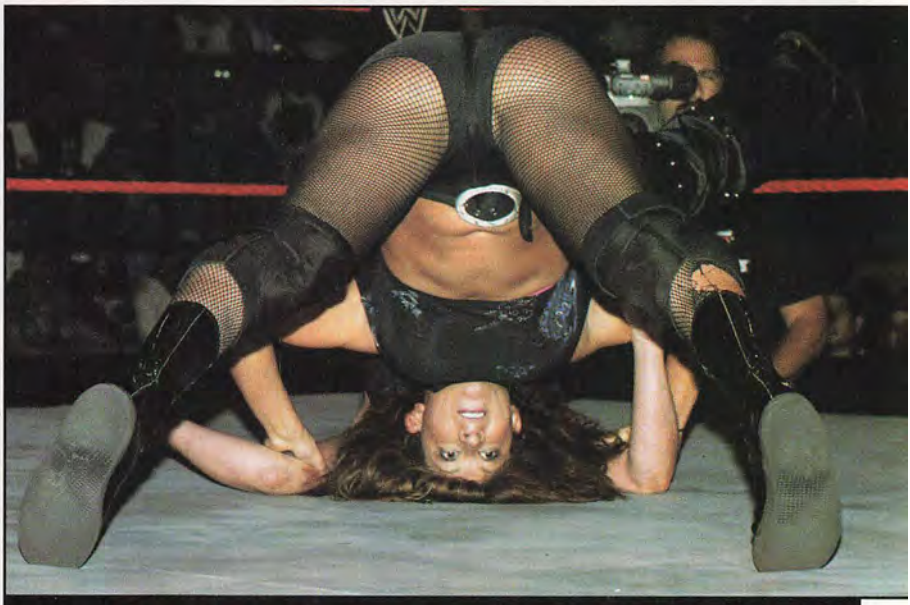


IT'S OBVIOUS THAT MARK JINDRAK HAS SOME GREAT ABS, BUT IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO GENUFLECT BEFORE THEM?

"YOU'VE GOT A LITTLE DIRT ON YOUR CHEEK. LET ME LICK MY FINGERS AND GET IT FOR YOU."

HEY, SHOULD I GO THROUGH WITH THIS TEST OF STRENGTH?

Spike Dudley seemed to be looking to our photographer for advice before committing to this test of strength with Akio. Spike decided on his own what to do and eventually overpowered the former Jimmy Yang to win the match.



NIDIA HOPED HER IMPERSONATION OF THE LETTER "A" COULD LAND HER A SPOT ON ONE OF THOSE "M-AZING: ARE YOU?" M&M COMMERCIALS

Hey, she'll need it since she was released from her WWE contract in November.

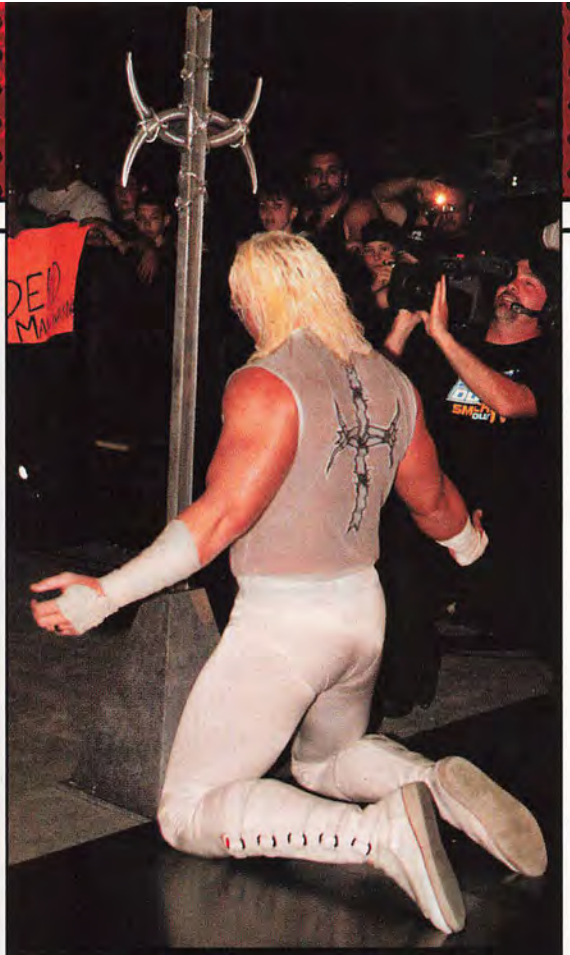
WILLIAM REGAL WAS FURIOUS HE DIDN'T GET THE ROLE OF TWO-FACE IN THE LATEST *BATMAN* SEQUEL

Regardless of which version of Harvey Dent you preferred (Billy Dee Williams in the first *Batman* or Tommy Lee Jones in *Batman Returns*), you'd have to admit Regal could work wonders with the role. Heck, if he could help Eugene get the best of Evolution, just imagine how he could help The Joker, Riddler, and Penguin defeat The Caped Crusader?

***"NOW* WHO'S DA MAN?"**

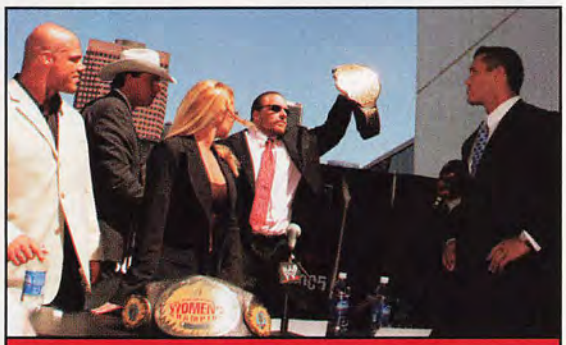
Mark Henry seemed to be taking particular delight in choking the life out of Bill Goldberg. Maybe Henry resented all of the bad things Goldberg said about WWE through the years, or maybe he just wanted to prove that he truly is "The World's Strongest Man." Whatever it was, you can bet Goldberg came away with quite a bit more respect for the former Olympic powerlifter after this match.

"NO, *YOU* PULL *MY* FINGER!"

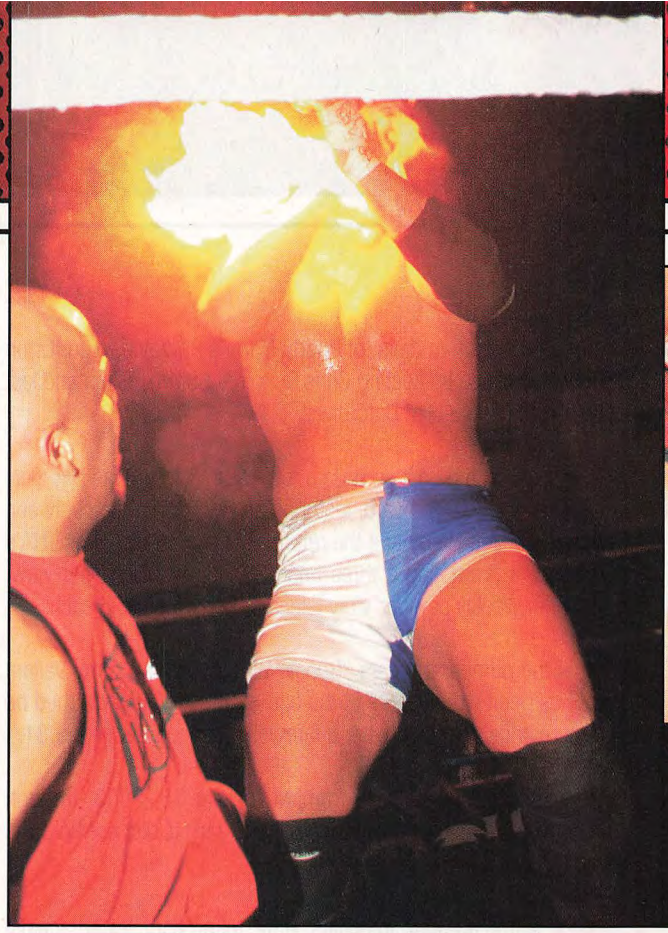


"AND DELIVER ME FROM SYNN, AMEN"
Mordecai's prayers were answered, even if it was only for a couple of months. The former Seven got his WWE callup early in the summer and set out on a personal crusade. Unfortunately for him, he was sent back down to Louisville before anyone could figure out what he was crusading for or against. Unflattering tights, perhaps?

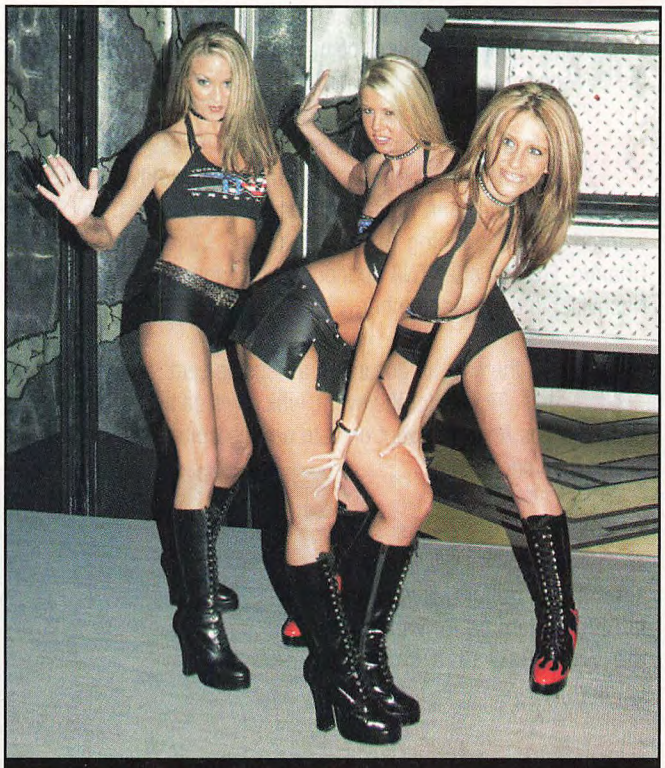
GET 'EM, BOY!
You have to give Trish Stratus some credit. When she turned against Chris Jericho and joined forces with Christian at WrestleMania, she realized she needed more protection than the oft-injured CLB could provide. Enter Tyson Tomko … who jumped at the chance to leave Synn's side in OVW and sidle up to the sexy Canadian diva. Trish's plan worked, as she's had a stranglehold on the women's title since mid-year.



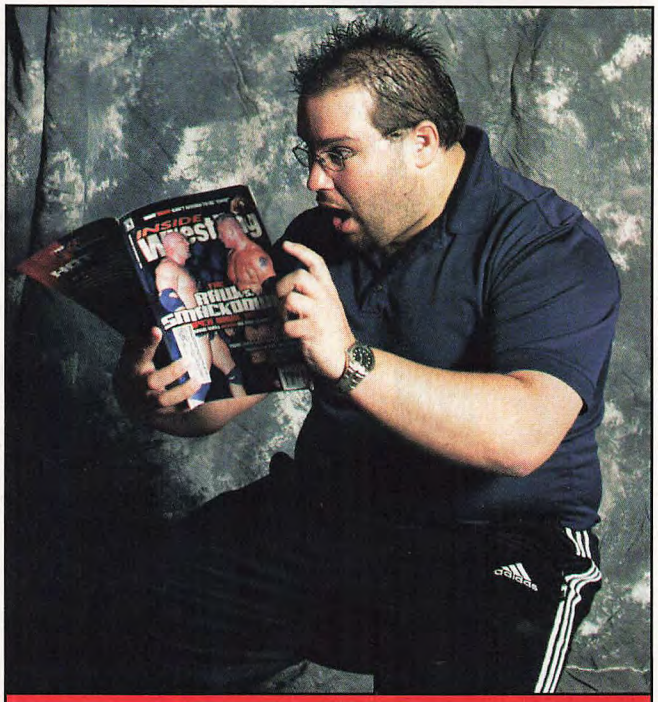
STYLIN' AND PROFILIN'
Kurt Angle, JBL, Trish Stratus, Triple-H, Rey Misterio Jr., and Randy Orton broke out their Sunday best for an outdoor WrestleMania press conference at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Layfield had to be glad Misterio was around; Rey looked even more ridiculous in the suit and mask than JBL looked with the cowboy hat.



WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? THE GUY'S NAME IS HOMICIDE!
Maybe throwing a fireball at Samoa Joe seemed like a good idea at the time, but he should have known better. Homicide only made the Ring of Honor champion angry … and you wouldn't like Samoa Joe when he's angry.



PUTTING THE T & A BACK IN TNA
Quick question: If TNA has this many attractive women on hand, why did they hire an outside model for a half-second spot in the promotion's "Genesis" promotional video? Just wondering.



***WHOA!* THAT MATT BROCK REALLY SHOOTS FROM THE HIP!**
Team Canada mastermind Scott D'Amore was amazed at something he was reading in the pages of our sister publication *Inside Wrestling*. If you want even more up-to-date news and rumors, Scott, make sure you call the *PWI* Hotline too. Number's on the back cover of this magazine.

2004 PWI Achievement: Numbers 2004

1 was the entry number given to Chris Benoit at the 2004 Royal Rumble. Benoit survived the entire match, outlasting 29 other competitors, to win the Rumble and earn a world title shot at WrestleMania XX.

2 is the number of times Christopher Daniels has won the ECWA Super 8 Tournament. "The Fallen Angel" became the first Super 8 winner ever to repeat by beating Austin Aries in the finals of this year's event, four years after he first won it.

4.65 is the impressive time, in seconds, of Brock Lesnar's 40-yard dash during a private workout held just weeks after he left WWE. It made a lot of NFL teams take his bid to make the league seriously. Despite ultimately not making the regular Minnesota Vikings 2004 roster or even the team's practice squad, Lesnar said he would continue to work toward playing football in the NFL and did not regret his decision to leave wrestling.

5 is the number of times Shawn Michaels faced Triple-H in a pay-per-view match in 2004. The former partners squared off at the Royal Rumble, WrestleMania, Backlash, Bad Blood, and Taboo Tuesday.

6 is the number of sides on the Lucha Libre-inspired ring adopted by TNA this year. Perhaps in an attempt to differentiate itself from WWE, TNA decided to exclusively use the hexagonal rings and eschew the traditional four-sided rings.

7.01 is the percentage of votes received by Jonathan Coachman in the online poll to determine a challenger for Chris Jericho's Intercontinental title at Taboo Tuesday. The Coach received more votes than Christian, Rhyno, Maven, The Hurricane, Val Venis, William Regal, and several other prominent WWE stars. Shelton Benjamin finished first in the poll and pinned Y2J for the championship.

28 is the length, in days, of Randy Orton's Raw title reign. Orton won the title by beating Chris Benoit at SummerSlam and lost the title back to Triple-H at Unforgiven.

29.95 is the cost, in dollars, of TNA's Victory Road pay-per-view. The card, featuring an NWA title match between Jeff Jarrett and Jeff Hardy and the return of The Outsiders, was TNA's first attempt at promoting a three-hour, Sunday night pay-per-view. The two-hour weekly pay-per-view telecasts had cost $9.95 each.

40 is the number of years "Boogie Woogie Man" Jimmy Valiant has been wrestling as of the end of 2004. Valiant claimed he would retire once and for all after a farewell match on December 31.

42 is the number of days from November 15, 2003, through November 15, 2004, on which Jeff Jarrett did *not* hold the NWA heavyweight title.

500 is the amount, in dollars, of a "token fine" levied against OVW champion Chris Cage for attacking and injuring Tank Toland backstage after Toland and his cousin Chad had stolen the OVW heavyweight title from him.

687 is the approximate distance, in miles, that TNA fans who had regularly attended the weekly Wednesday night pay-per-views in Nashville, Tennessee, had to travel if they wanted to see a taping of *Impact* (or the Victory Road PPV) in Orlando, Florida, after TNA abandoned the weekly PPV format (and Nashville) in early-September.

750 is the cost, in dollars, of a ringside seat for WrestleMania 21. Tickets for the event, which will be held at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, went on sale on September 25 and sold out in less than one minute.

250,000 is the prize amount, in dollars, awarded to Christy Hemme for winning the WWE Raw diva search competition.

1,000,000 is the cash value, in dollars, of the contract to be awarded (over four years) to the winner of the *Tough Enough IV* competition. Unlike in the first three seasons of *Tough Enough,* contestants were eliminated by viewers through an online voting process. The contest segments aired on *Smackdown.*

CAREFUL ON THOSE CROTCH CHOPS, BOYS. YOU MIGHT BREAK A HIP

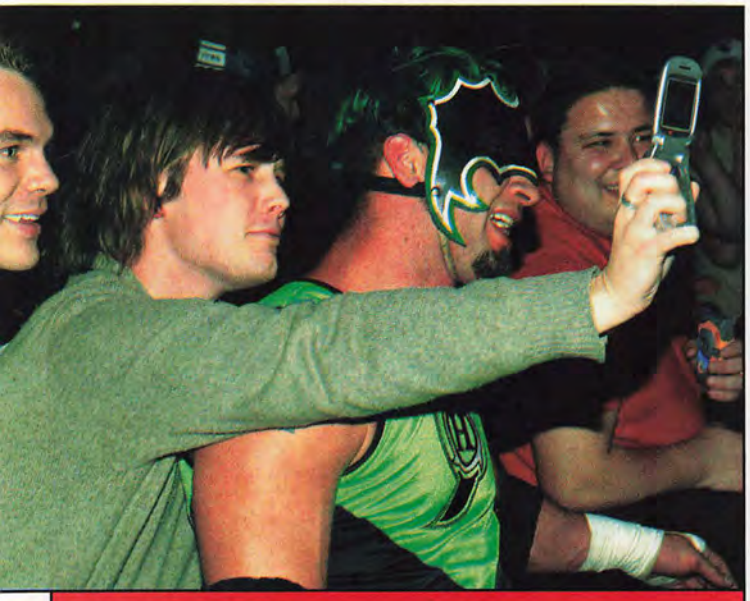
Eight years after shocking the world by defecting from the WWF to WCW as The Outsiders, Scott Hall and Kevin Nash were up to their old (and we mean *old*) tricks again in 2004. After making a handful of appearances on the indy scene, the charter members of the New World Order showed up in TNA, where they wasted little time in cutting lengthy promos, insulting talented wrestlers, and trotting out the same catchphrases they've been using for the past decade. We feel like we've seen it all before—about a dozen times, actually.

PAUL HEYMAN FINALLY GETS TO VENT AT ERIC BISCHOFF FOR STEALING MIKE AWESOME IN THE MIDST OF HIS ECW TITLE REIGN

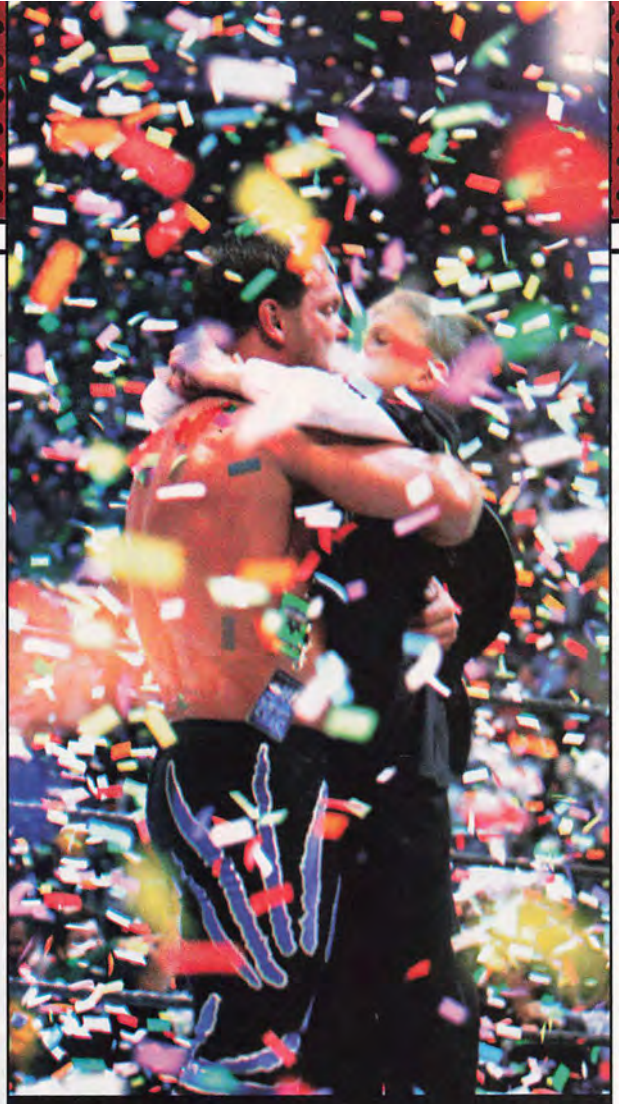
Actually, Heyman felt he was getting a (excuse the pun) raw deal in the draft lottery. Despite Heyman's protests, Smackdown actually made out quite well in that lottery, gaining Rob Van Dam, the Dudleys, and others. But Heyman has never let something as inconsequential as the facts get in the way of a good argument.

WHAT GOES UP ... MUST COME DOWN

We can't help it. There's just something therapeutic about watching Coach go through a table.



SAY HURRI-CHEESE!



ANOTHER KODAK MOMENT TRAGICALLY RUINED BY CONFETTI

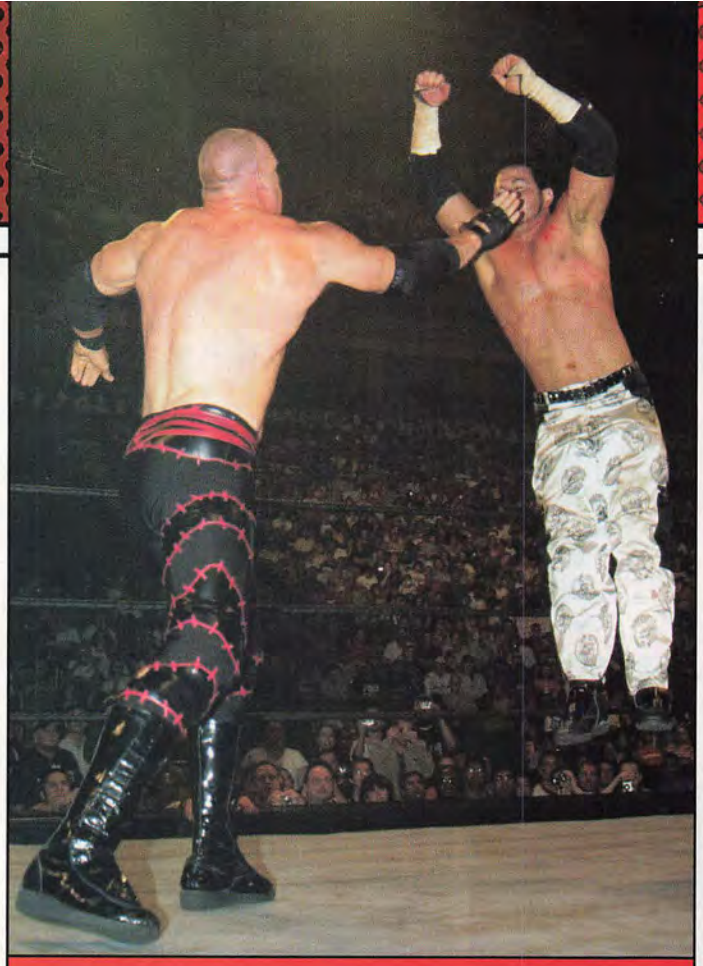
You'll have to take our word that there's an emotional shot of Chris Benoit hugging his son behind that wall of falling confetti. At least, we *think* that's who's in the ring.

RIDING OFF INTO THE SUNSET

And that goes for both Steve Austin and Pat Patterson. When this photo was snapped early in the year, no one could have predicted both "Stone-Cold" and the WWE Hall of Famer would be leaving the promotion in the coming months. Austin took his leave a few weeks after WrestleMania XX, while Patterson announced his retirement in October.

LITTLE-KNOWN TNA FACT: ALL WRESTLERS ARE REQUIRED TO GET THEIR BASIC CPR CERTIFICATE

Unfortunately for Michael Shane, the company doesn't spring for those Rescue Annie dolls, either. Up next: mouth-to-mouth!

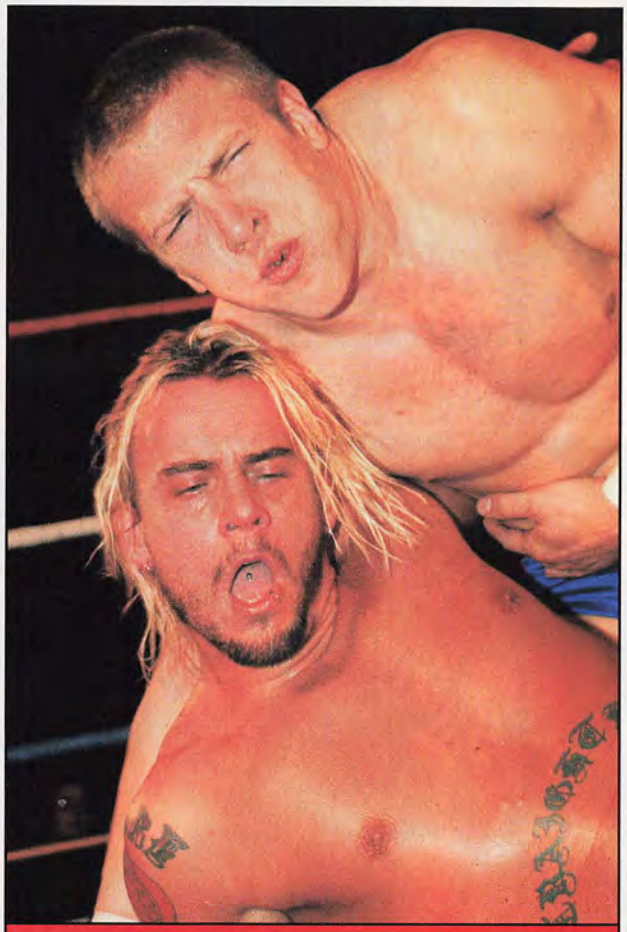


KANE LEARNS THE INCORRECT WAY OF PLAYING THE CHILDREN'S GAME "I'VE GOT YOUR NOSE"

THEY CALL THIS A DUDLEYVILLE MASSAGE. NOW LET'S QUICKLY CHANGE THE SUBJECT

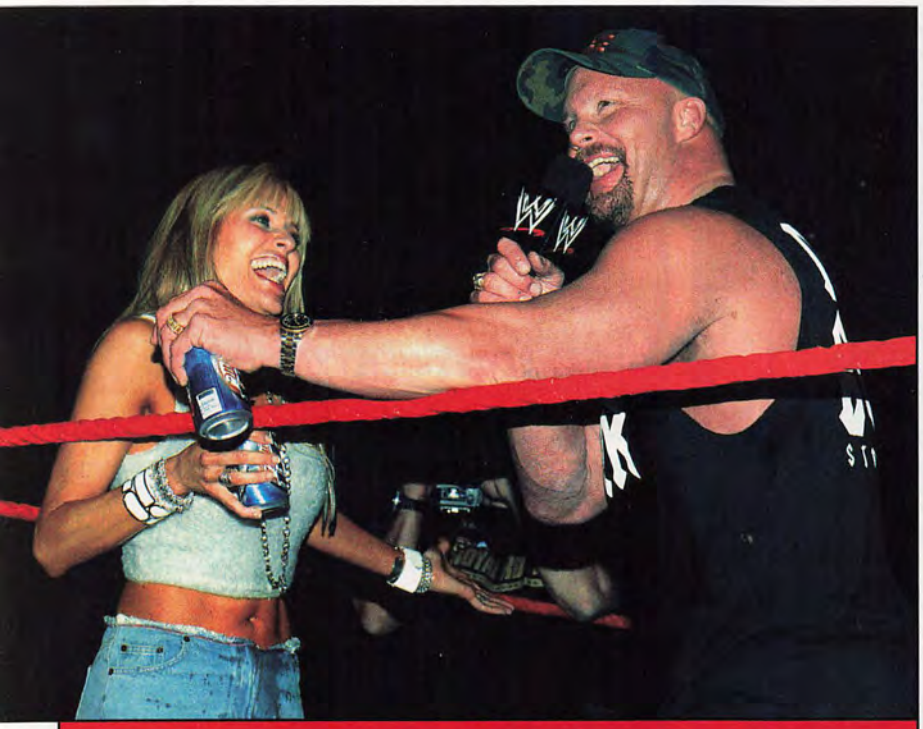
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T WIN THE SUPER 8 TOURNAMENT—YOU HAVE TO GIVE JUSTIN CREDIBLE PIGGY BACK RIDES AROUND THE RING

Maybe that's not quite fair to John Walters. After all, the Super 8 is an ECWA tournament, and this photo is from a Ring of Honor event. Regardless—and despite how it looks in this shot—Walters has had great success in both promotions.



PLEASE, PLEASE, DON'T FORCE US TO WATCH THE GOLDBERG-LESNAR WRESTLEMANIA MATCH AGAIN

C.M. Punk and Bryan Danielson look like they're about to blow chunks in this action shot. Either they're both extremely winded, or something just turned their stomachs. And what was more stomach-churning than Goldberg vs. Lesnar?



WELL, IN AUSTIN'S DEFENSE, LILIAN GARCIA SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO WEAR A WHITE TOP

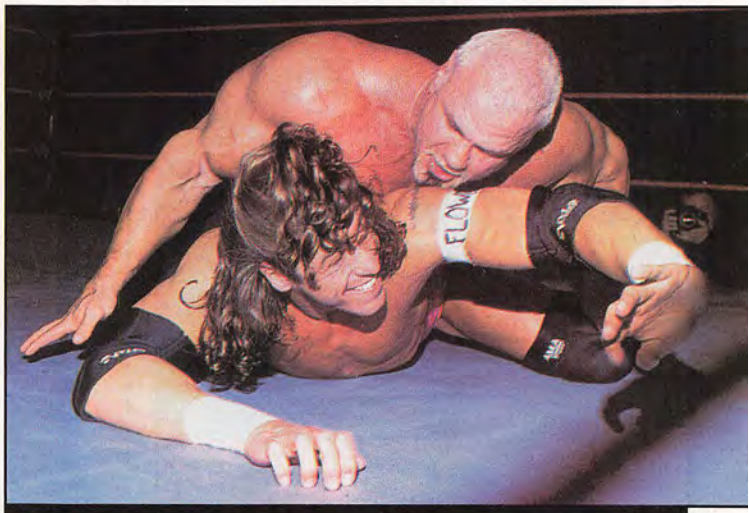
After all, isn't Austin's catchphrase "Don't trust anybody"? Rookie mistake, Lilian, rookie mistake.

VINCE McMAHON IS HOPING HIS LATEST INNOVATION— ZERO GRAVITY WRESTLING— WILL BE A HIT

GAIL KIM WORKS ON SCORING A SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER ENDORSEMENT

KENZO SUZUKI ON THE THRONE

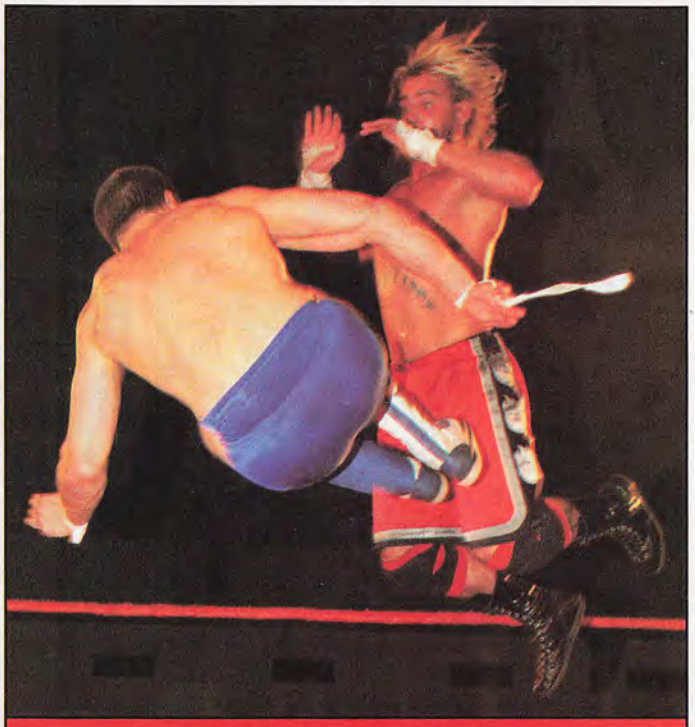
Kenzo Suzuki had a rocky start to his WWE career. First, he was set to debut as Hirohito, named after the Japanese emperor during World War II. When that idea flopped, Kenzo got a name change and was sent from Raw to Smackdown, where he had to battle sizeable expectations and a formidable language barrier. No wonder he looks so uncomfortable on that palanquin, and no wonder his supporters are covering their faces.



AND THE ANNUAL WILL WELSH AWARD FOR MOST HOMOEROTIC POSE GOES TO ...

Regardless of whether "Big Poppa Pump" is cuddling up to Steven Richards or roughing him up with some of the weardowns he learned from his collegiate days at Michigan, Richards doesn't appear to be too happy with his current position. How badly do you think poor Steven wants to reach the ropes right now?

FOR ONCE, EARL HEBNER WOULD FEEL SAFER INSIDE THE RING THAN OUTSIDE

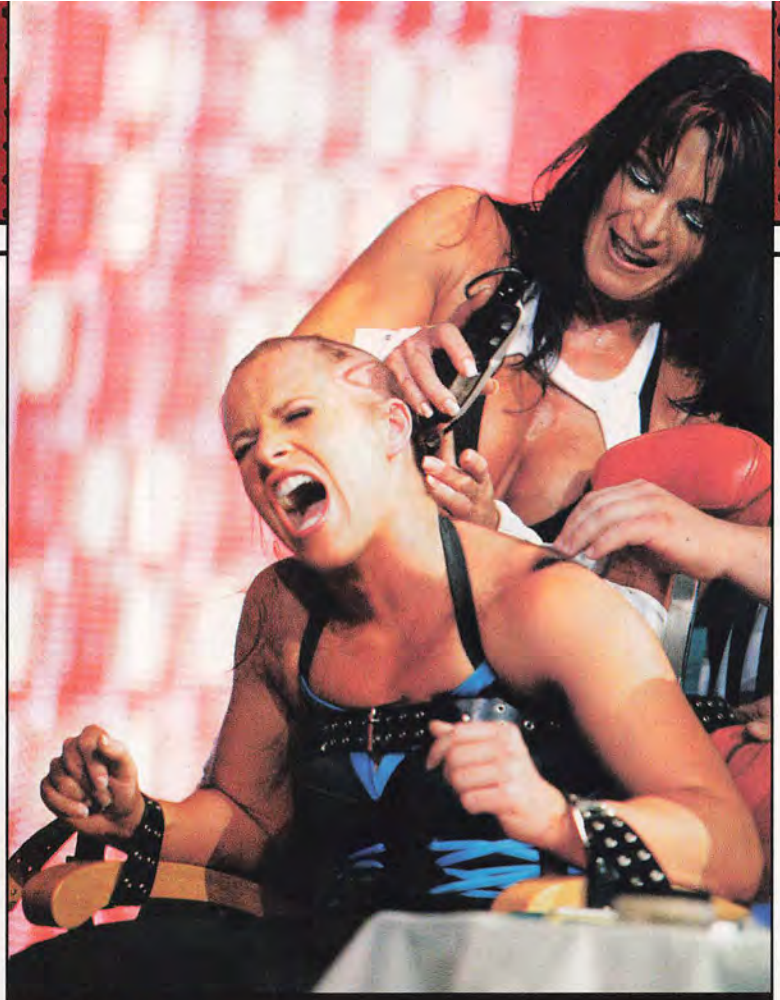


AND THE 2004 "KICK ME IN THE JIMMY AWARD" GOES TO ...

2004 PWI ACHIEVEMENT

"REF, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, YOU'RE SUFFOCATING HIM!"

In reality, Chris Benoit was checking with the referee on Eugene's condition after a beatdown by Evolution, but because of the camera angle and the ref's placement, it looked for all the world to see like the ref was sitting on Eugene's face. No wonder Benoit was so animated.

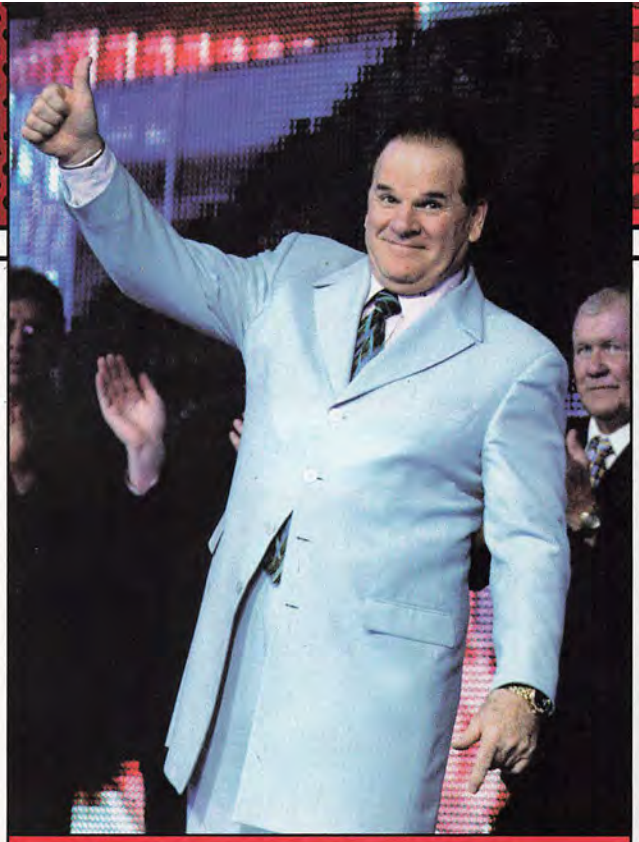


SINEAD HOLLY?

WrestleMania XX may have been billed as the event "where it all begins again," but the event was anything but memorable for poor Molly Holly. Not only did she lose her match against women's champ Victoria, but as the result of the match stipulation, she also had her head shaved completely. And boy, did that hair take a long time to grow back!

OKAY, MICHAEL, WE'RE READY TO TAKE THE PICTURE NOW. OVER HERE, MICHAEL. *YOO-HOO!* MICHAEL?

OVW TALENT KNEW CUTBACKS WERE COMING WHEN INSPECTOR IMPACT (A.K.A. LUTHER REIGNS) WAS REQUIRED TO DOUBLE AS THE RING STEPS



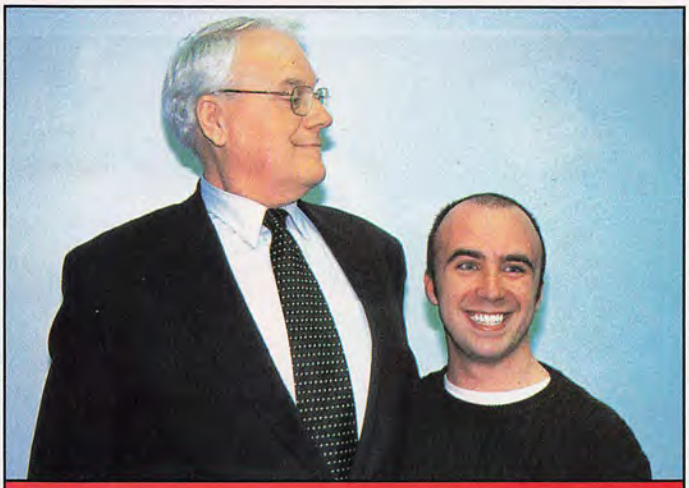
"I CAN FINALLY CALL MYSELF A HALL OF FAMER (WELL, SORT OF)"

WWE chairman Vince McMahon was no doubt hoping to grab a little bit of cheap mainstream publicity when he decided to induct disgraced former Major Leaguer Pete Rose into the WWE Hall of Fame on WrestleMania weekend. Well, WWE did get some publicity, but it wasn't what you'd call a glowing endorsement from the media. But "Charlie Hustle" seemed to enjoy the attention. Good thing his arch-nemesis Kane wasn't too close by.

TORRIE WAS MORTIFIED TO SEE JACKIE HAD WORN THE SAME OUTFIT TO THE CARD!

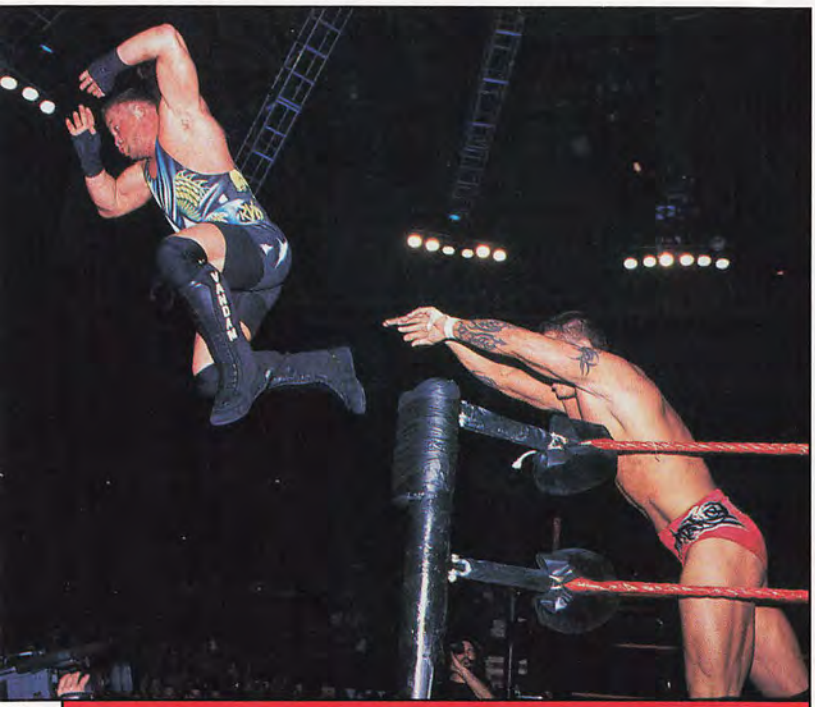
SO HAPPY TOGETHER

Poor Eugene. He was so excited to make friends with the great Triple-H. Of course, Evolution was only using the good-natured Eugene as a pawn in its war against Chris Benoit. After the turn, Eugene quickly recovered from his heartbreak by embarrassing both HHH and Ric Flair numerous times.



"SO WHERE'S THE GUY YOU WANT ME TO POSE WITH?" "RIGHT NEXT TO YOU, MR. DILLON."

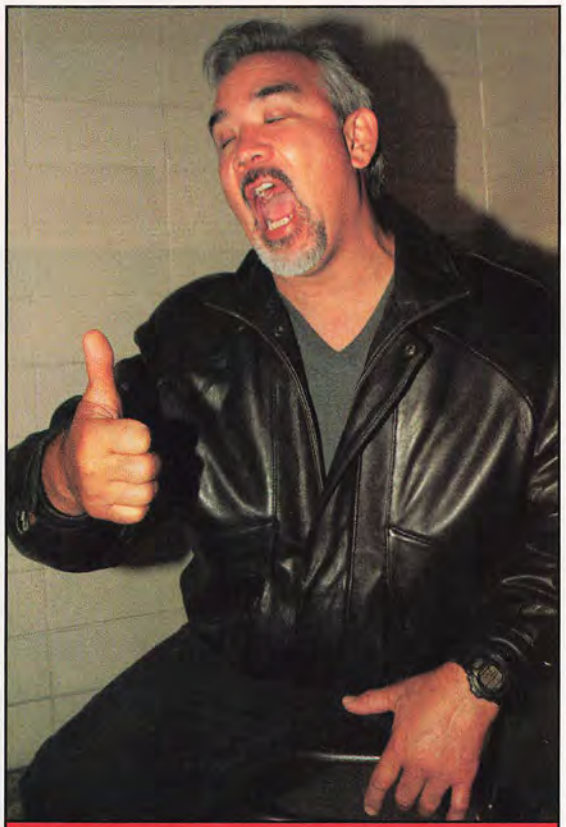
When J.J. Dillon agreed to host this year's Super 8 Tournament, a lot of the wrestlers and managers were eager to snag a photo with the legendary manager of The Four Horsemen. ECWA manager Carlton P. Hightower was no exception, though Dillon couldn't help but tease him about his size. He also shared a few tricks of the trade, which might be why Hightower was wearing such a big smile here.



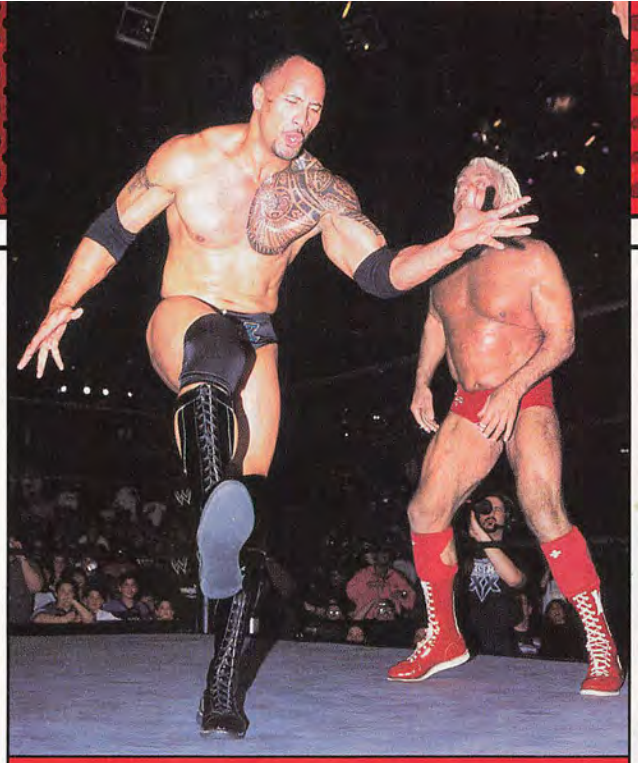
RANDY ORTON IS ALWAYS UP FOR A GAME OF "TOSS THE RVD." THE QUESTION IS WHETHER OR NOT THE FANS ARE READY TO CATCH HIM

MOMENTS AFTER THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN, JONNY FAIRPLAY AND DON CALLIS RUSHED OFF TO MASSACHUSETTS TO EXCHANGE WEDDING VOWS

WITH THIS GUY AS A PARTNER, I DON'T EVEN NEED TO SUIT UP
Test takes a moment to show off Scott Steiner's biceps. Unfortunately for both men, the fans were far more interested in checking out Stacy Keibler's assets than Steiner's.



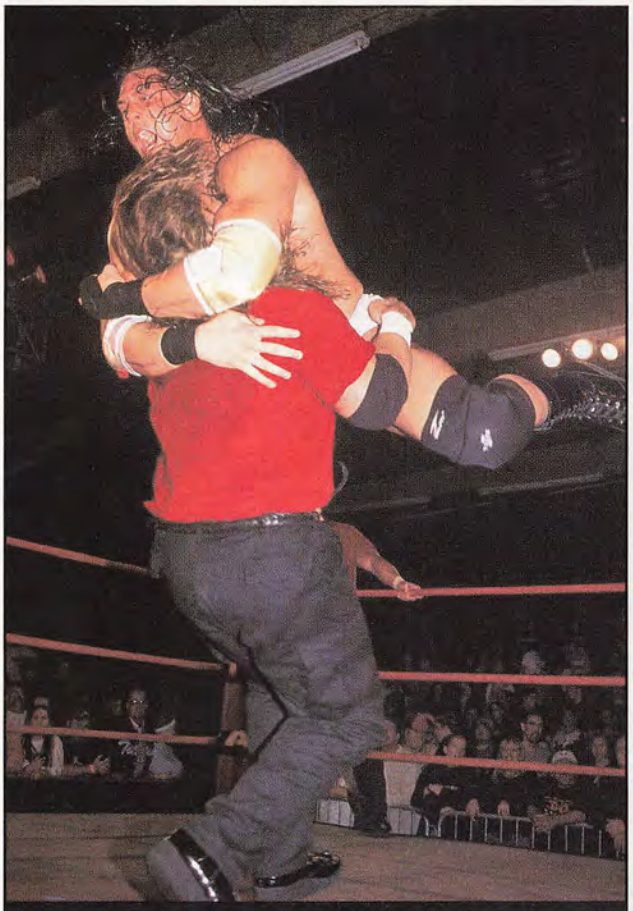
RICK STEAMBOAT'S IMPRESSION OF HACKSAW DUGGAN IS ALWAYS A HIT WITH THE BOYS IN THE BACK



"THE ROCK SAYS PUT YOUR RIGHT FOOT IN AND SHAKE IT ALL ABOUT. AND THAT'S HOW THE ROCK DOES THE HOKEY-POKEY"

THE MARVIN THE MARTIAN "YOU MAKE ME VERY, VERY ANGRY" AWARD GOES TO ...

Edge came back from his neck injury with more emotion than ever before. After years of goofing off, Edge has finally discovered his killer instinct and seems focused on winning the Raw title. He made sure Randy Orton remembered who just took him out with a spear.

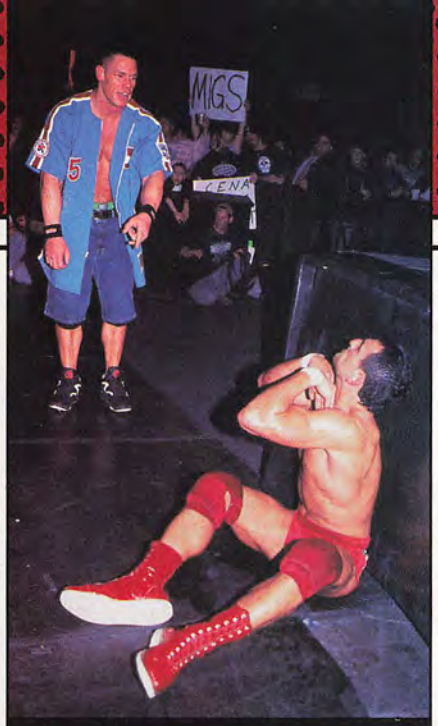


THESZ PRESS OR PASSIONATE EMBRACE? DECIDE FOR YOURSELF

DESPITE MONTHS OF PRACTICE, TAJIRI'S CHEERLEADING ROUTINE FAILED TO IMPRESS THE CRITICS

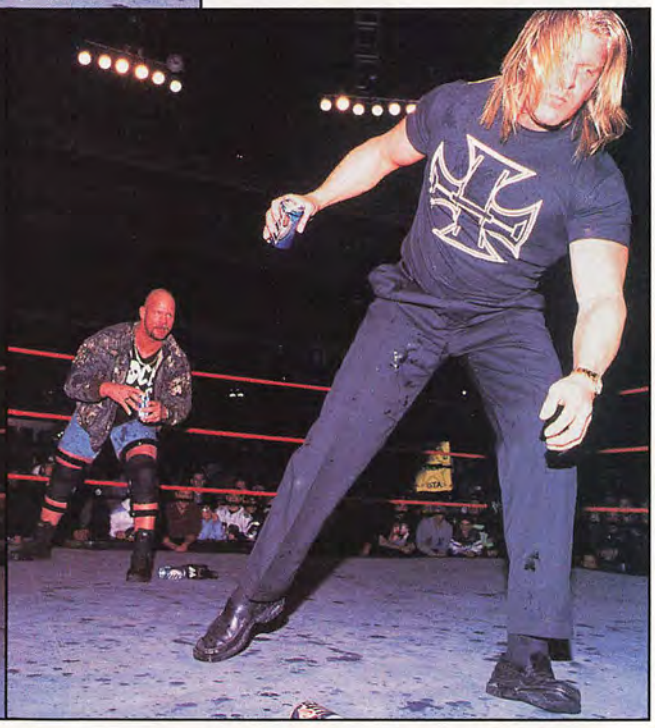
WHY DO WE HAVE A FEELING THIS BEER BASH WAS DESTINED TO END WITH A STUNNER?

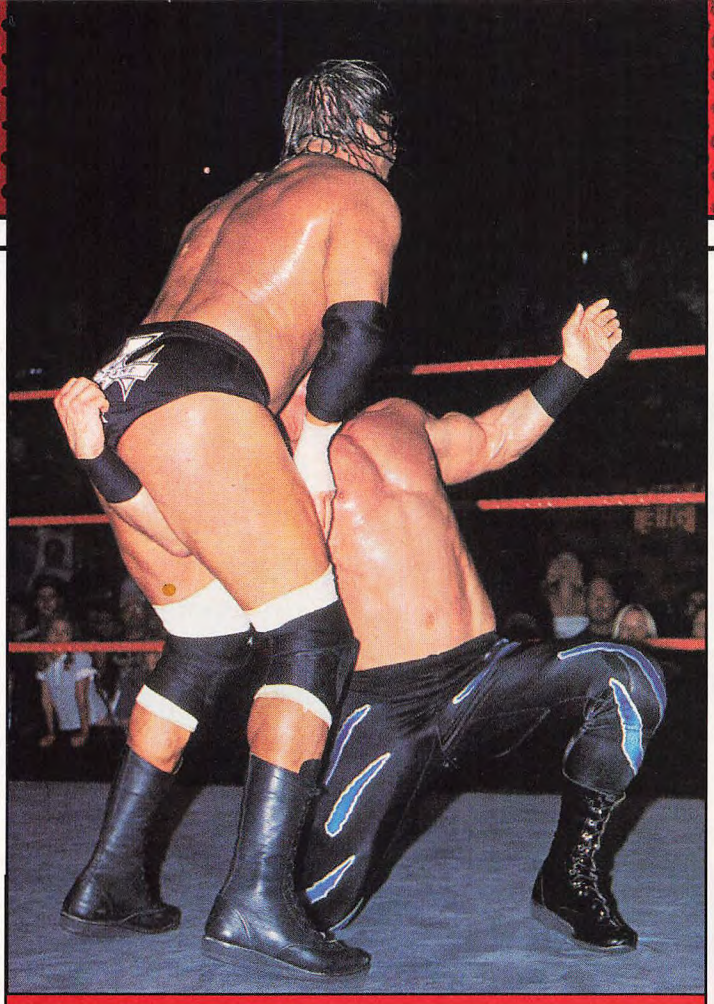
Probably because Steve Austin looked so amused by Triple-H's pompous celebratory poses. When will HHH learn not to trust the ol' "Rattlesnake"? And while he's at it, he'd better learn how to hold his beer.



"YO, NUNZIO. HOW'D YOU SCORE SUCH GOOD SEATS?"

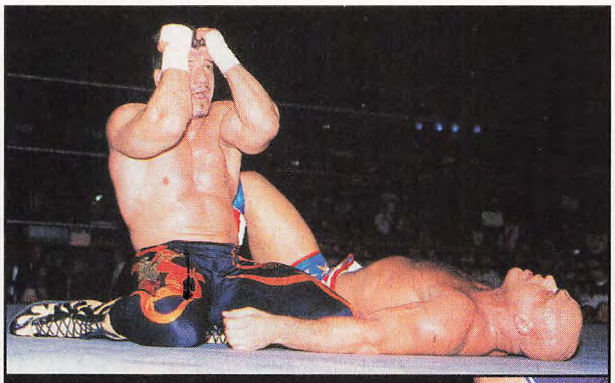
Nunzio thought he had a foolproof plan at the Royal Rumble. Instead of joining the match, he crouched at ringside and watched other wrestlers get eliminated, planning on joining the fray at the last minute and pulling off the upset of the decade. His plan almost worked, as he was barely noticed by most of the battle royal participants. Unfortunately for Nunzio, John Cena was on to his diabolical plan.

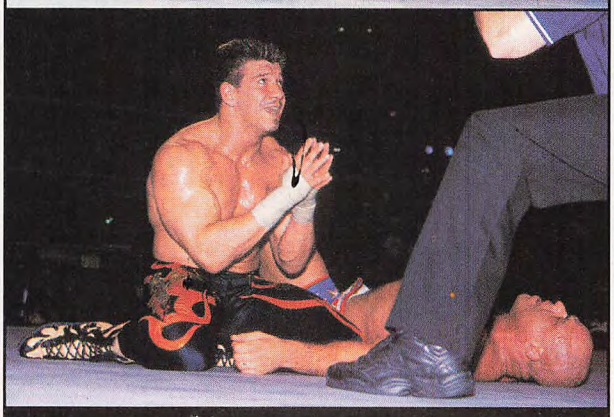




OOOOOOF!

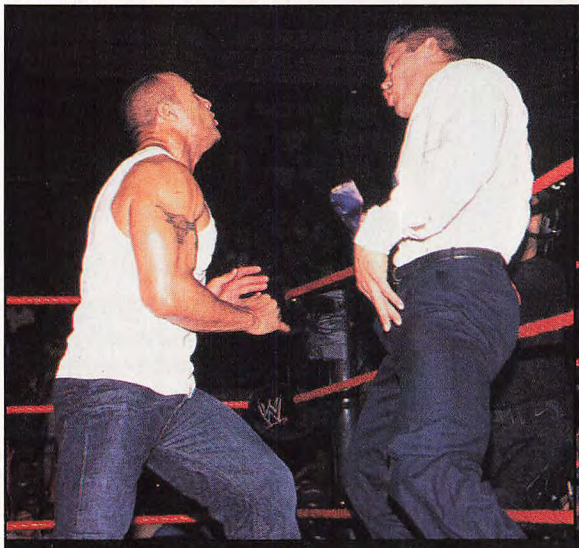
Article 6, section 359 of the official pro wrestling rulebook: "No wrestler shall be permitted to strike, be it by hand, foot, head, or any part of the body, an opponent in the groin area. Flagrant infractions of this rule are grounds subject for immediate disqualification and violators will be subject to disciplinary actions, including fines, suspensions, or termination." Maybe Chris Benoit could have used a little refresher course.

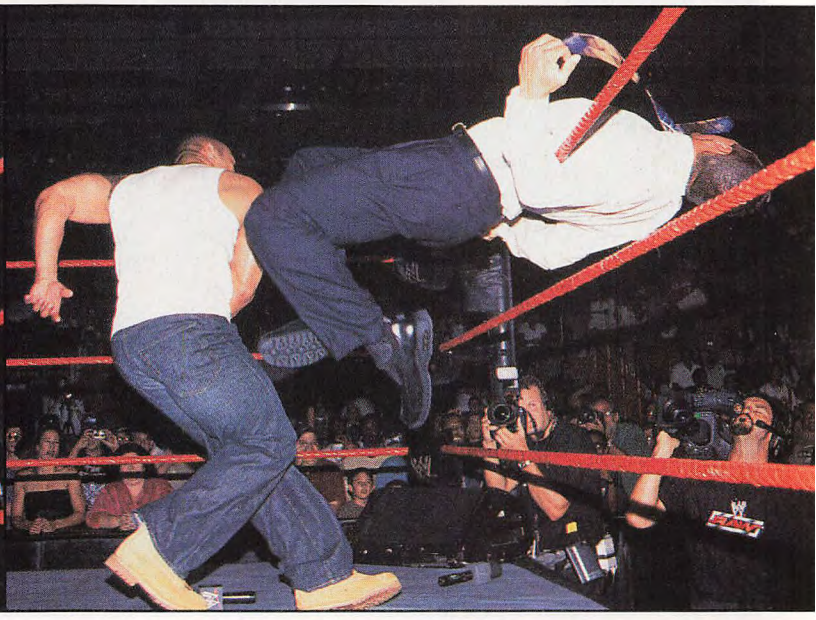




"COME ON, THAT WAS THREE! *PLEASE* SAY THAT WAS THREE!"

Eddie Guerrero went from disbelief to begging over this near-fall. He learned a huge lesson during his reign as Smackdown champ: Opponents fight a lot harder when a world title is on the line.

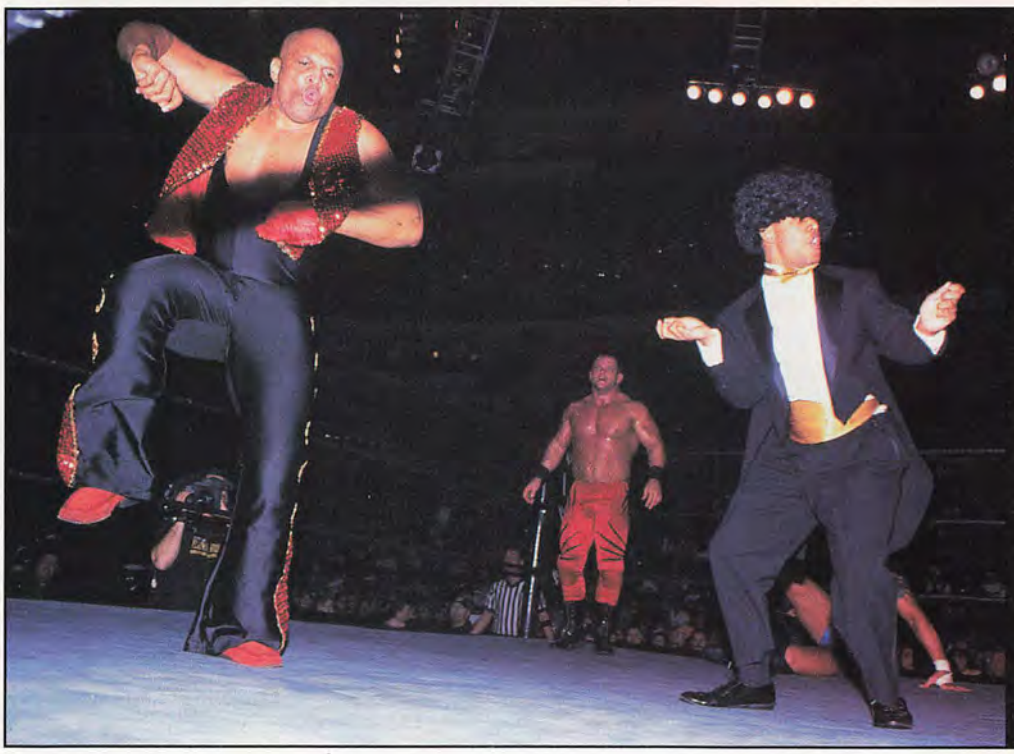




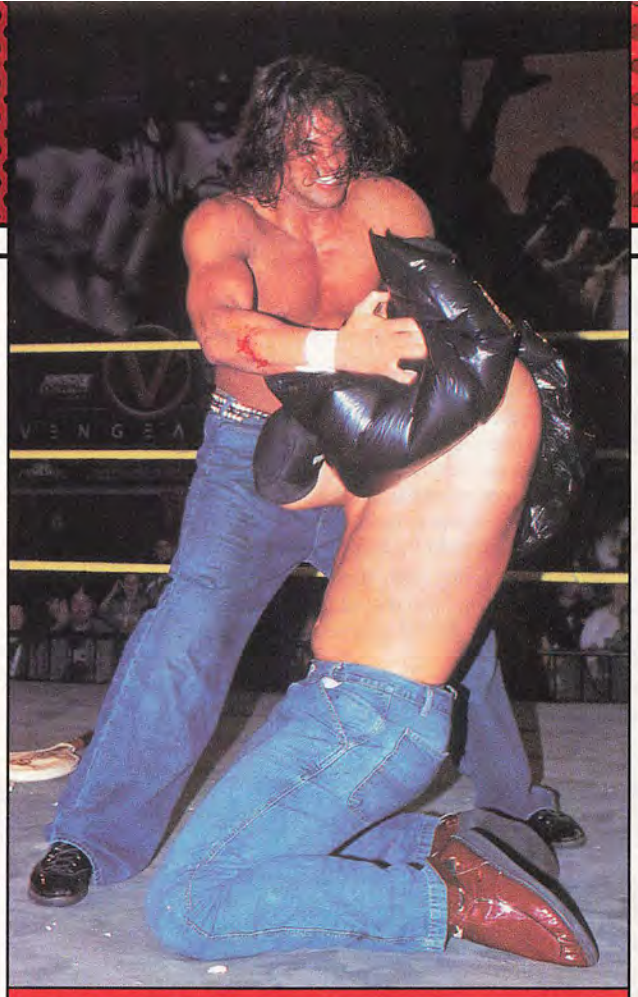
LAYING THE SMACK DOWN ... AND OUT

C.M. PUNK: PARTY POOPER
You'd think the straight-edged one would be in a good mood after he and Colt Cabana won the Ring of Honor tag title, but even with all the balloons and party favors, there he was, sulking away like a sourpuss. Maybe they just had champagne backstage and not the non-alcoholic sparking grape juice he prefers.

NOBODY DOES IT LIKE SARAH LEE
We're not sure if Sarah Lee (long-time ticket taker for various Tennessee-based promotions) was doing her Rick Rude impersonation for Kid Kash on a TNA PPV in January or what. Quite frankly, we don't want to know. We bet Kash was wondering why he ever was ever stupid enough to treat the lovely Trinity so poorly and let her get away from him.

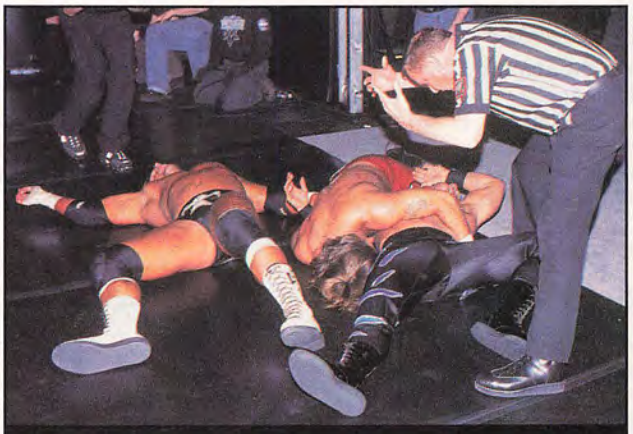


SOMEBODY CALL HIS MAMA!
Ernest "The Cat" Miller and his sidekick, Lamont, finally got a chance to show their stuff in WWE. After spending several months as the color man for *Velocity,* Miller made his wrestling debut, but seemed far more interested in dancing like James Brown than in wrestling. His biggest WWE moment came when he made a play for Sable and ended up in a dance-off with Vince McMahon. McMahon must have really hated losing, as both were let go a short time later.



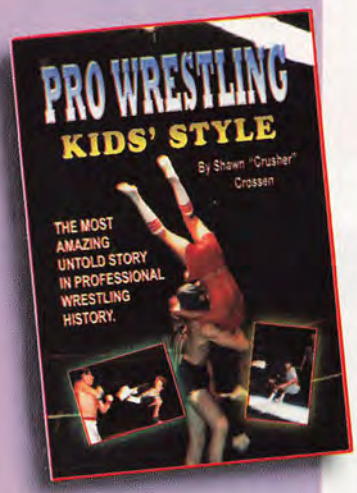
HARDCORE, JERSEY-STYLE
One of the biggest feuds in OVW this year came to a head when The Jersey Crew (Nova, a.k.a. Simon Dean), Idol, and Trudi DeNucci squared off against Synn and her Disciples (Seven, a.k.a. Mordecai) and Travis (a.k.a. Tyson) Tomko in a Jersey Shore streetfight. The six-person bout was one of the wildest hardcore brawls in OVW history, ending when the debuting Danny Inferno helped The Jersey Crew steal the victory. Shortly after the match, both Mordecai and Tomko got the callup to WWE.

VINCE'S PERSONAL DIVA SEARCH HITS A SNAG
Vince McMahon enjoyed making Jonathan Coachman strip and put on a dress at Taboo Tuesday. The only thing more bizarre than Coach's underpants is the look of pain on Eric Bischoff's face in the background as Eugene shaves his head.



"GUYS, I KNOW IT'S BEEN A LONG NIGHT, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO WAKE UP. THIS IS WRESTLEMANIA, FOR PETE'S SAKE!"

NOTE TO JEFFS: WHY?
While Jeff Jarrett tries his best to figure out how he wound up in this position in the first place, Jeff Hardy is trying to figure out how he wound up in this promotion. One Jeff has the power of owning the promotion while the other, well, is covered in paint for no apparent reason.



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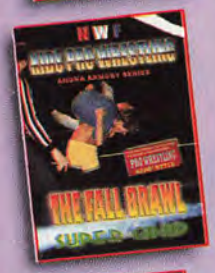

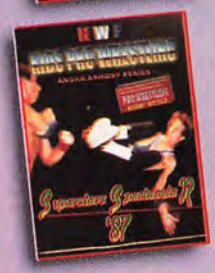

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Saturday, October 18th, 1986 marked the biggest card ever promoted by the NWF at the Anoka Armory, with a complete sellout as over 450 plus fans attended this event. Several big matches including Crusher Crossen against Mr. Macho and Kid Kelsey against Slick Steenerson, but the big main event featured 6'-8" 272 lbs. Luscious Larry against the NWF's very own Pretty Boy Taylor.

Superstars Spectacular R '87

Saturday, August 23rd, 1987 marked the NWF's final card promoted at the Anoka Armory. On this card were several NWF stars such as The Invaders, The Destructors, and The Ice Dragon. But the big one was Crusher Crossen defending his NWF title against long time friend and now enemy Kid "Hot Stuff" Kelsey. An amazing night of wrestling as the NWF promoted it's sequel to the event that started it all back in 1986.

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2004 PWI Achievement Awards

Section compiled by Will Welsh

IT'S AMAZING HOW much things can change in just 12 months. One year ago, Smackdown nearly pulled off a clean sweep of the 2003 *PWI* Achievement Awards, capturing nine of the 11 honors, including the three most prestigious awards—Wrestler, Tag Team, and Match of the Year.

In other words, Smackdown was dominant.

Not this year! After tallying all of the votes, we discovered that 2004 clearly belonged to Smackdown's older sister, Raw. Or at least that's what you thought. Raw wrestlers took home seven of the 11 awards, including Wrestler and Match of the Year. Smackdown, on the other hand, got shut out of the big three awards, as a TNA duo quietly slipped by all their WWE counterparts to take home Tag Team of the Year honors. The only awards Smackdown managed to capture were in the Most Popular and Most Inspirational categories.

How did Raw overtake Smackdown? It's pretty obvious: WWE compensated for Raw's deficiencies by making sure that it got rid of wrestlers who were taking it down, garnered a few big names from Smackdown to bolster the roster, and provided the brand with more overall stability.

Gone were men such as Kevin Nash and Bill Goldberg, who made things interesting for Raw but also made the brand seem too much like the old WCW. The departure of "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin may have even helped Raw move forward. An up-and-comer like Randy Orton didn't have to worry about getting overshadowed by a man who had become more of an executive than a wrestler.

New to the Raw scene were Chris Benoit, Shelton Benjamin, Edge, and Matt Hardy, three of Smackdown's brightest stars—and three stars that Smackdown never really replaced. As you'll see in the pages that follow, all four of these wrestlers left their mark on the Achievement Awards—one much more so than the others.

For its part, Smackdown didn't just lose Benoit, Edge, Hardy, and Benjamin. The brand also lost the sport's most dominant personality, Brock Lesnar. When Lesnar decided to walk away from WWE to take a shot at playing in the NFL, he left a gaping hole in the Smackdown roster that was never really filled. Booker T, Rob Van Dam, and other newcomers tried to fill Lesnar's void, but they struggled after discovering just how big that void was.

For the first time in its two-year-plus history, TNA captured a *PWI* Achievement Award. Actually, it picked up two—Rookie and Tag Team of the Year. Winning in the tag team category is a real coup for the promotion, as it validates not just the tag team that captured it, but TNA's entire tag team division. However, it may well be that the Rookie of the Year aware was the more important of the two for TNA to capture because it shows that TNA can develop its own roster of wrestlers without having to depend on WWE castoffs.

The independents were completely locked out of first place and top runner-up spots, but Ring of Honor stars did receive a fair amount of votes, especially in the Wrestler, Tag Team, and Match of the Year categories. If there had been a category for Independent Wrestler of the Year, ROH champion Samoa Joe surely would have captured that prize.

Finally, the editors of *PWI* selected Pat Patterson, who recently retired from WWE, as the recipient of the 2004 Stanley Weston Award in honor of his lifetime achievements and contributions to the pro wrestling industry. Although you probably never realized it, Patterson was responsible for booking some of the biggest matches in the sport's recent history.

Thanks to all the fans who took the time to cast votes this year. Now, without any further ado, here are *your* selections for the best of the best of 2004.

2004 PWI Achievement

MONTY BROWN, THE former NFL linebacker with both the Buffalo Bills and the New England Patriots, capitalized on his jacked up physique, unusual charisma, and his hard-hitting, straight-ahead style to secure the 2004 *PWI* Rookie of the Year Award—an accolade that some are predicting will be the first of many he collects over the course of his career.

Brown's accomplishments in 2004 were impressive for a wrestler with so little experience. Heck, they would have been pretty impressive for a man with five years of experience! How many neophytes have been able to say they survived a feud with hardcore legend Sabu, let alone say they came out on top of it? Not many, but Brown can. He destroyed the former ECW heavyweight champion during a falls-count-anywhere match in April by outbrawling him. When he speared Sabu into a trash can to finish him off and score the pinfall, even we were holding our ribs and cringing just a bit.

"Monty Brown's falls-count-anywhere win against Sabu really said a lot about his character," wrote Parker Stone of Mooresville, North Carolina. "I really thought that he was going to be timid and scared of Sabu, but he carried a good portion of the match and won it fairly easily. That match had to have put the entire TNA locker room on notice."

If that win didn't put the TNA locker room on notice, then we're sure that Brown's three-month-plus undefeated streak did. From mid-spring through early-summer, Brown tore up whomever opposed him. First down was B.G. James (the former Road Dogg), then came a pair of wins against Sonny Siaki. By the time the streak was over, Brown had plowed his way through Pat Kenney, Abismo Negro, D-Lo Brown, Lex Lovett, and Antonio Banks. He was nearly unstoppable.

We use the word "nearly" because Brown did eventually lose, to Jeff Hardy in a number-one contender's match for the NWA championship. Then, later in the year, he lost another number-one contender's match to Hardy. In fact, if there's anything to criticize him for, it's his lack of success in big matches ... but, then, he did beat Raven and Abyss in a three-way "Monsters' Ball" match at Victory Road in November. With help from Dallas Page, he pinned Raven again two days later at an *Impact* taping

Of course, rookies aren't supposed to just waltz in and win all their big matches, are they?

"Brown showed me that he's going to have a bright career," wrote Daniel Norwood of Jasper, Alabama. "What more do you want from a Rookie of the Year?"

Runners-Up

PETEY WILLIAMS [38 percent]

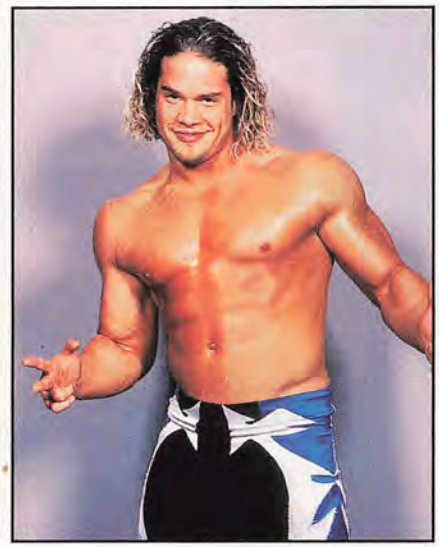
First runner-up: It can be argued that Petey Williams of TNA had an ever better year than Monty Brown did. Not only did he win August's 20-man gauntlet match to capture the X division championship, he also won the NWA Indiana state title by defeating A.J. Styles and the IWA Mid-South heavyweight title by beating B.J. Whitmer. No wonder the winner and the first runner-up of this category were only separated by a few percentage points.

JOHNNY NITRO [9 percent]

Second runner-up: Johnny Nitro, a.k.a. *Tough Enough III* champion John Hennigan, didn't do all that much when he was called up from Ohio Valley Wrestling to act as Eric Bischoff's apprentice, but at least he was called up. Even though he didn't wrestle much on *Raw,* that three-month stint with the brand is probably what pushed him past the other *Tough Enough III* champion, Matt Cappotelli, this year's third-runner up for Rookie of the Year.

MATT CAPPOTELLI [4 percent]

Third runner-up: Hardcore Holly just doesn't like this guy. After roughing up the high-flyer during *Tough Enough III's* most controversial segment, Holly gave him a concussion during a house show match in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Once again, though, Cappotelli displayed toughness, this time by returning sooner than anticipated. Unfortunately, plans to bring him up to the Smackdown roster were scrapped because of the injury, but 2005 is a new year.



VOTES FOR OTHERS [8 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Jonathan Coachman, Da Beast, D-Ray 3000, and Mike Taylor.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

MONTY BROWN

[41 percent]

2004 PWI Achievement

AT THE END of 2001, Eddie Guerrero's career with WWE was seemingly over. A series of personal problems led WWE officials to give him his outright release from the company, and he was forced to ply his trade on the independent circuit. He wrestled for Ring of Honor and even made a pay-per-view appearance for the now-defunct World Wrestling All-Stars promotion, but everyone knew that he wanted to get back to WWE.

And as one of the most technically proficient wrestlers in the sport, wrestling fans knew that he *belonged* in WWE—as long as he could keep his demons in check.

WWE welcomed him back to the promotion in April 2002, but while company officials seemed to forgive his prior transgressions, some of his fellow wrestlers wouldn't let Guerrero forget his past. They rode him hard for two reasons: The more sadistic ones simply wanted to watch him break, while others thought that bringing up his past would give them an advantage in the ring.

It didn't work. Instead, all it did was drive Guerrero to push harder and to prove that he's as good—or possibly even better—than the fans say he is. In the end, it pushed him to defeat Brock Lesnar for the Smackdown championship on February 15 at No Way Out, and then to hold on to that championship belt for more than four months before losing it to John Bradshaw Layfield at the Great American Bash.

"I was so happy to see Guerrero win the Smackdown championship," wrote Wayne Gellar of Enfield, North Carolina. "He's overcome so much that I can't think of a wrestler who is more deserving. He inspired me to push myself when others are pushing against me and to embrace setbacks as opportunities."

Guerrero's title victory and subsequent championship reign didn't just inspire fans, though. Chris Benoit, who had been on the cusp of a big championship win for years entering 2004, watched Guerrero upset Lesnar for the title. Then, with extra motivation, Benoit went out and defeated Triple-H and Shawn Michaels for the Raw championship on the sport's biggest stage—WrestleMania.

"I'm voting for Eddie because I don't know if Chris Benoit would've won the Raw championship if Eddie hadn't captured the Smackdown championship first," wrote Chad McCallister of Chelan, Washington.

We'll have to check out ballots to see if there was one with Benoit's name on it.

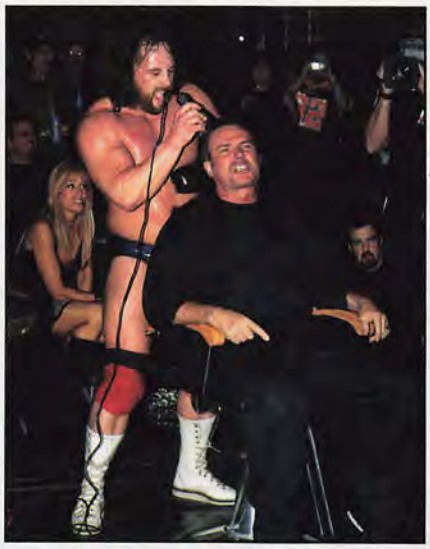
Runners-Up

CHRIS BENOIT [22 percent]

First runner-up: There's nothing quite like watching an athlete who is regarded as the best in the sport go out and prove it—and that's what Benoit did in 2004. From his defeat of Triple-H and Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania to his subsequent victories against Helmsley, Michaels, and Kane to retain the title, Benoit refused to fail by wrestling every match like he was the challenger. How can such incredible effort not inspire you?

EUGENE [20 percent]

Second runner-up: Master Eugene didn't win any major championships in 2004, nor was he given an opportunity to challenge for any. What he did, though, was win over a sometimes bitter audience of wrestling fans by making them appreciate honesty, integrity, and innocence. Eugene was manipulated by Eric Bischoff and then Evolution for a good portion of the year, but he never let their abuse change him or even get him down. The guy was all heart.



WILLIAM REGAL [6 percent]

Third runner-up: Regal may seem an odd fit for this category, but when you consider that he started the year as a cold, calculating heel of a man and ended the year as a crusader for the innocent, it's easy to see why he received so many votes. Eugene had friends, but Regal was his only champion. "Regal defended Eugene a lot," wrote Cindy Marmuth of Cross City, Florida. "He deserves to be recognized."

VOTES FOR OTHERS [22 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Shelton Benjamin, John Cena, The Hurricane, Rey Misterio Jr., Victoria, and David Young.

INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

EDDIE GUERRERO

[30 percent]

2004 PWI Achievement

RANDY ORTON, WWE'S *other* third-generation superstar, fought his way out of Triple-H's shadow to prove that he's ready to claim his spot as one of the sport's top superstars.

In 2003, if Orton wasn't recuperating from injuries, he was busy helping Triple-H keep his big gold championship belt around his waist. His constant interference in Helmsley's matches made him one of the most hated men in the sport, but it also held him back, because Triple-H wouldn't allow him to smash his way through Raw's glass ceiling. He was expected to stand at Helmsley's side—and to never even *try* to step out in front of him. Although he had captured the Intercontinental title by year's end, he was still seen as one of Helmsley's lackeys. He earned no respect from the fans whatsoever.

Orton let everyone know that 2004 was going to be different right from the get-go. He beat Rob Van Dam in a scintillating match to retain his Intercontinental championship on *Raw* on January 12, and then came out on the winning end of an ugly feud with Mick Foley—a feud that culminated in Orton defeating Cactus Jack (Foley's legendary alter-ego) in a hardcore match at Backlash.

Beating Cactus Jack in a hardcore match that involved barbed wire and thumbtacks? That's how you earn respect, people.

Orton's successful series of matches against Foley isn't what earned him this award, though. When Orton surprised the world by beating Chris Benoit—and doing it cleanly—for the Raw championship at SummerSlam, he basically locked up the win in this category.

"Randy Orton proved that he had what it took to become one of the sport's greats at SummerSlam," wrote David Kim of Mill Valley, California. "He stood across the ring from Benoit and beat him for the championship fair and square. He didn't cheat, didn't need interference from Evolution, and didn't even require a weird stipulation to get the win. He got the job done on his own. That's why Triple-H and Evolution kicked him out of the group—because he had gotten too big for it."

Orton's ouster from Evolution was a factor in the balloting. Many voters said that they were impressed with his ability to stand on his own, and some even said that there's no way they would have voted for him had he remained with the group. The fact that he lost the Raw championship to Triple-H less than a month after winning it didn't seem to hurt his vote tally, either.

"Orton became great in 2004," wrote Bobby Manuel of Woodland Hills, Texas. "That's why he received my vote."

Runners-Up

SHELTON BENJAMIN [17 percent]

First-runner up: Benjamin made the most of WWE's draft lottery by leaving his tag team partnership with Charlie Haas to establish himself as a successful singles wrestler who is right on the cusp of joining Raw's top tier. A series of wins over Triple-H came as a surprise to everyone but him, and his defeat of Chris Jericho for the Intercontinental title at Taboo Tuesday in October earned him more than a few late votes.

BATISTA [14 percent]

Second runner-up: In 2004, Batista remained in his position as Evolution's enforcer, but he slowly started to come out of his shell. He had short runs as a Raw tag team champion with Ric Flair as his partner, and he took steps to establish himself as more of a presence in Raw's singles division. However, he could have used a definitive feud, because this vote seems to be based more on perceived potential than anything else.

JOHN BRADSHAW LAYFIELD [10 percent]

Third runner-up: Did JBL get robbed? It sure seems that way. The long-time tag team competitor finally struck out on his own in 2004—and in doing so, he captured the Smackdown championship! How much more improved can a wrestler get? Perhaps the only reason Layfield didn't place higher is because in the ring, his technique is virtually the same technique he's used for years. His attitude is what changed in a huge way in '04.

VOTES FOR OTHERS [22 percent]

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Abyss, Andy Douglas & Chase Stevens, Eugene, Chris Harris, Matt Morgan, Samoa Joe, and Michael Shane.

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

RANDY ORTON

[37 percent]

2004 PWI Achievement

WE HAVE A feeling that this vote may have gone another way if Edge had exposed his dark side sooner rather than later, but considering everything he went through in 2003 and early-2004, he probably deserves this award nonetheless.

If you recall, Edge missed most of '03 and the beginning of '04 while recovering from spinal fusion surgery. His recovery was painstakingly slow and, if reports of his rehabilitation sessions were anywhere near accurate, excruciatingly painful. When he returned to the active roster by spearing Raw General Manager Eric Bischoff during WWE's draft lottery, he appeared to be a man on a mission: He not only wanted to come back as good as he was—he wanted to come back better. He refused to let those months of agony result in yet another mid-card push.

Even though he was just coming back from spinal fusion surgery, Edge out-performed himself. First, he shrugged off a broken hand that he received while wrestling for Ohio Valley Wrestling and took down Kane, Raw's maniacal monster, at Backlash. Then he teamed with Chris Benoit to defeat Ric Flair and Batista for the Raw tag team title. To cap off his return, he soundly defeated Randy Orton at Vengeance, ending the upstart's impressive seven-month Intercontinental title reign!

"When Edge came back from his neck surgery, he wasn't playing around," wrote Bill Cotton of Globe, Arizona. "He didn't duck from anyone—right, Kane?—and won a couple of titles. In fact, the only title that eluded him was the Raw title, and I think that the fans robbed him of his chance of winning it by not voting enough for him at Taboo Tuesday."

Taboo Tuesday—the pay-per-view around which Edge's 2004 seems centered—is perhaps why Edge didn't win this Achievement Award with an even higher percentage of the vote. About 65 percent of fans who sent in their ballots prior to Taboo Tuesday voted for Edge in this category, yet, after Taboo Tuesday, that percentage dropped to about 22 percent. Fair? Probably not, because Edge deserves the award anyway. But it does go to show you how timing and popularity can throw a kink in non-partisan voting.

"Edge had my vote until he started blaming me—and the rest of the fans—for failing to get him his match against Triple-H at Taboo Tuesday," wrote a disgruntled Matt Revoulb of Abbeville, Louisiana. "I voted for him at Taboo Tuesday, so I didn't want to hear that from him. He turned his back on his fans. It wasn't the other way around."

Runners-Up

JEFF HARDY [27 percent]

First runner-up: Hardy is an amazing talent, and his re-immergence in TNA was one of the biggest talent acquisitions in the promotion's history—especially considering that most experts thought he'd never wrestle again. Fans agreed that he brought a spark to TNA's six-sided ring, and most were happy to see him immediately challenge Jeff Jarrett for the NWA title.

WILLIAM REGAL [19 percent]

Second runner-up: Of all the contenders for Comeback of the Year, William Regal may have gone through the most. His career was nearly ended by a debilitating illness that caused fluid to build up in his system. His heart also stopped functioning properly, forcing doctors to start it and stop it to restore it to working order. Somehow, he rehabilitated enough to earn himself a full medical clearance to wrestle. Now *that's* a comeback.

CHAVO GUERRERO SR. [6 percent]

Third runner-up: Chavo Classic, Chavo Guerrero Jr.'s father, originally signed with WWE to help his son in his battle with Eddie Guerrero—Sr.'s father and Jr.'s uncle. However, Classic quickly found that he still had the wrestling bug, and it wasn't long before he was wrestling men half his age. His "accidental" defeat of his son and Spike Dudley in a three-way match to win the cruiserweight championship capped off a surreal return to the ring.

VOTES FOR OTHERS [2 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Shelton Benjamin, Jazz, Viscera, and David Young.

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

EDGE

[46 percent]

2004 PWI Achievement

IT'S TIME FOR WWE's brunette bombshell to step out of the shadows. After 18 months spent making her living as Trish Stratus' worst nightmare, Victoria shed her madwoman demeanor and showed the world that's she's perhaps the best all-around female performer in the sport today.

A 3½-month run as WWE women's champion followed by many more months of consistently impressive performances against one of the strongest female rosters in WWE's history allowed to her to capture *PWI's* 2004 Woman of the Year Award.

"There are a lot of women I could cast my vote for," wrote Greg Troda of Escondido, California, "but the only one who really deserves my vote is Victoria. She had an extraordinary year, highlighted by her reign as women's champion and her defeat of Molly Holly at WrestleMania. I heard some people say that she slowed down after losing the title to Trish, but I don't buy that at all. Trish stopped making regular defenses of the title, which is why it seemed like Victoria wasn't wrestling as much as she had been. She still was, but it was usually as a member of a two-person or three-person tag team!"

Many voters mentioned that when it came time to vote, they were ultimately choosing between Victoria and Stratus, WWE's top two women wrestlers—and the reasons why these two women received the votes they did were as different as the wrestlers themselves.

Most fans who voted for Stratus made numerous mentions of her stunning looks. In fact, almost 100 percent of votes for Stratus mentioned at least one aspect of her alluring physicality.

Sure, some of Victoria's votes came from men who consider her the most attractive woman of 2004, but most supporters made no mention of her beauty. What they did mention was her all-around wrestling ability and her willingness to persevere through pain. (We were impressed by the number of voters who noted her knee brace and the fact that most of her success came at a time when she wasn't completely healthy.) Many fans brought up the fact that she captured the women's championship by defeating Jazz, Lita, and defending champion Molly Holly in a four-way match.

"There isn't a better female wrestler in the world right now," wrote Bridget Houston of Decatur, Georgia. "Victoria brings everything to the table: power, technical ability, and an uncanny knack for using her most dangerous moves at exactly the proper time. She's come a long way from her psycho days."

Runners-Up

TRISH STRATUS [26 percent]

First runner-up: Trish went for the hat trick in 2004 and, unfortunately for her, she came up short of capturing that third Woman of the Year Award in as many years. No doubt, Stratus lost votes due to her transformation from every man's dream into every man's worst nightmare, because she did have a longer run as women's champion than anyone else—even Victoria. "Trish was too despicable," wrote Kevin Frank of Wirt, Minnesota.

STACY KEIBLER [11 percent]

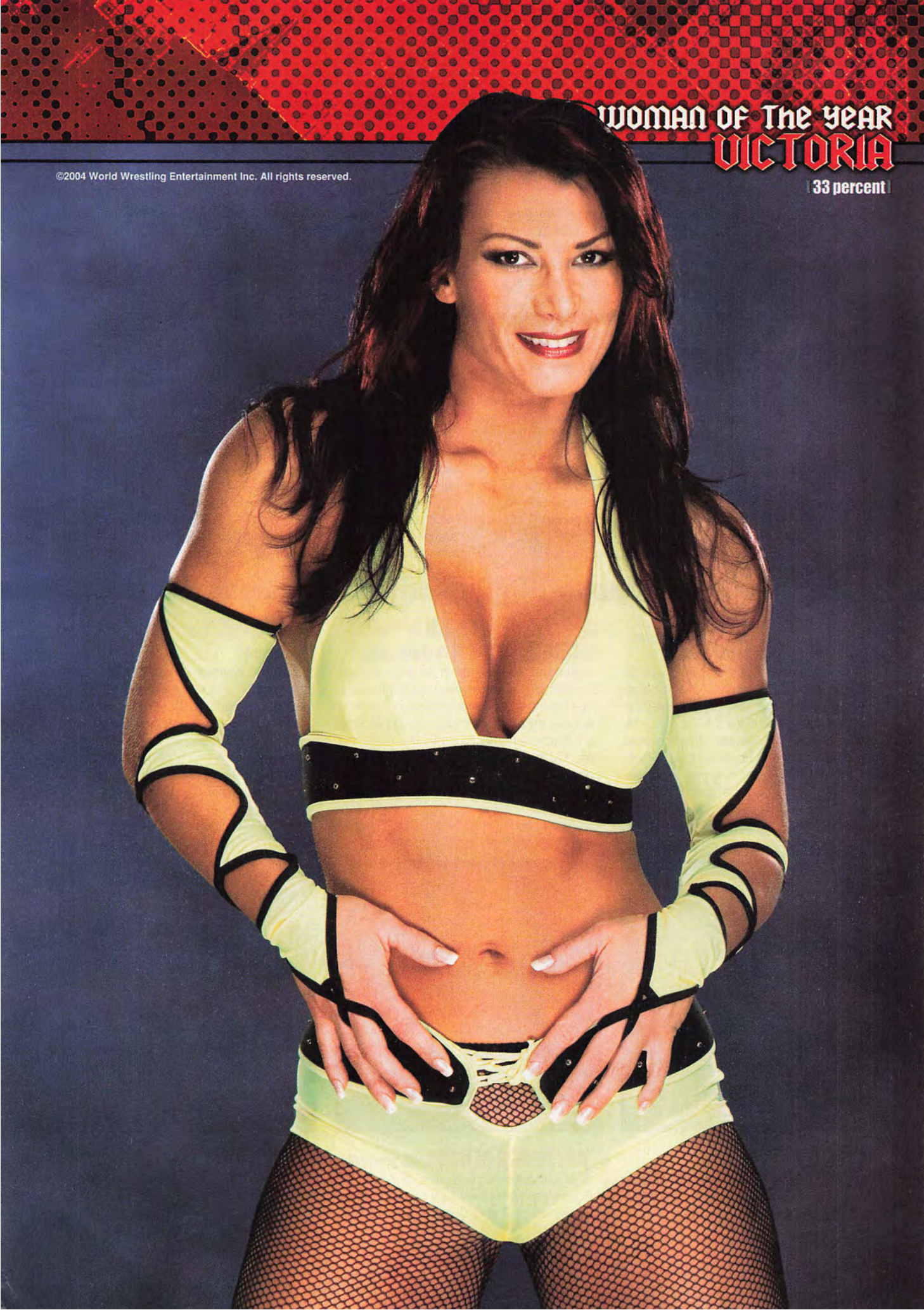
Second runner-up: Most voters voting for Stacy cited her unbelievable streak of five-star matches, her unprecedented domination of the women's division, and her steadfast dedication to tearing down the walls that separate the women and the men of WWE by challenging Triple-H to a "Hell In A Cell" match. Oh, she didn't do that? She placed third because of her skimpy skirt collection and the way she climbs into the ring? That's so wrong!

MOLLY HOLLY [8 percent]

Third-runner up: Molly Holly may not be the most likeable woman to ever step foot inside a WWE ring, but popularity doesn't have to be a component of success. She started off the year as WWE women's champion, and after losing the belt (and her hair) to Victoria at WrestleMania, she remained in contention for it through the rest of the year. However, some inexplicable losses to Stacy Keibler in the fall likely cost her precious votes.

VOTES FOR OTHERS [22 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Tracy Brooks, Dawn Marie, Jazz, Gail Kim, Alexis Laree, Nidia, Trinity, and Torrie Wilson.


WOMAN OF THE YEAR
VICTORIA
33 percent
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2004 PWI Achievement

IT WAS A feud that made people challenge their own likes and dislikes and maybe even realize that there's more to life than being cool and having witty things to say. Chris Benoit vs. Triple-H dominated conversations in the Raw locker room from late-January through much of the summer and proved that substance can be so much more enjoyable to watch than flash.

Crazily enough, the feud looked like an impossibility at the start of the year. In January, Triple-H was secure in his spot as Raw champion, while Benoit, as a member of the Smackdown roster, was teaming regularly with John Cena. A match, let alone a feud between the two men, seemed highly unlikely.

But then Benoit went on to win the Royal Rumble, which qualified him for a shot at a world title at WrestleMania. Instead of choosing the most obvious route, which would have been a match with then-Smackdown champion Brock Lesnar, Benoit graciously accepted the invitation of Raw sheriff "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin to make the jump and challenge Triple-H for his Raw championship. Triple-H argued against Benoit's decision, but nowhere in the Royal Rumble rulebook did it say that the winner had to challenge for his brand's title.

"Benoit's decision to challenge Helmsley after the Royal Rumble was genius," wrote Theo Findlay of Georgetown, Ohio. "It immediately gave him an upper hand in their feud because Triple-H clearly expected Benoit to stay on the Smackdown side of the fence."

Of course, Triple-H vs. Chris Benoit did have a monkey wrench thrown into it. The name of that monkey wrench? None other than Shawn Michaels.

HBK refused to be wedged out of the Raw title picture by the late-arriving Benoit. During Benoit's contract signing for his WrestleMania title shot, Michaels interrupted and cold-cocked "The Crippler" with some sweet chin music and then signed his name to the contract, prompting WWE matchmakers to book a triple-threat match for WrestleMania.

Michaels' involvement in the title scene helped to spice it up, but it never overshadowed the Helmsley vs. Benoit feud. Benoit wanted to defeat Helmsley more than anything else, and Helmsley wanted to prove how good he was by retaining his title against arguably the sport's best technical wrestler. At WrestleMania, Benoit walked away with the gold—and he did so by making "The Game" tap out to the Crippler crossface.

"The conclusion to their WrestleMania match, without any involvement of Michaels, was fitting," wrote Jeff Gladwin of Cadillac, Michigan. "Benoit made the man he really wanted to defeat tap out, and Helmsley submitted to the man whom he really wanted to prove himself against."

Runners-Up

MICK FOLEY vs. RANDY ORTON [21 percent]

First runner-up: Foley vs. Orton was as personal as any other feud in 2004. It began in late-2003, with the semi-retired Foley refusing to wrestle Orton in a move that was oddly out of character. Afterward, Orton prodded Foley, even spitting in his face, until Foley finally agreed to wrestle him one-on-one—which Foley did, as Cactus Jack! Their barbaric hardcore match at Backlash, which Orton won, exceeded expectations and helped elevate Orton into Raw's top tier.

CHRISTIAN vs. TRISH STRATUS vs. CHRIS JERICHO [11 percent]

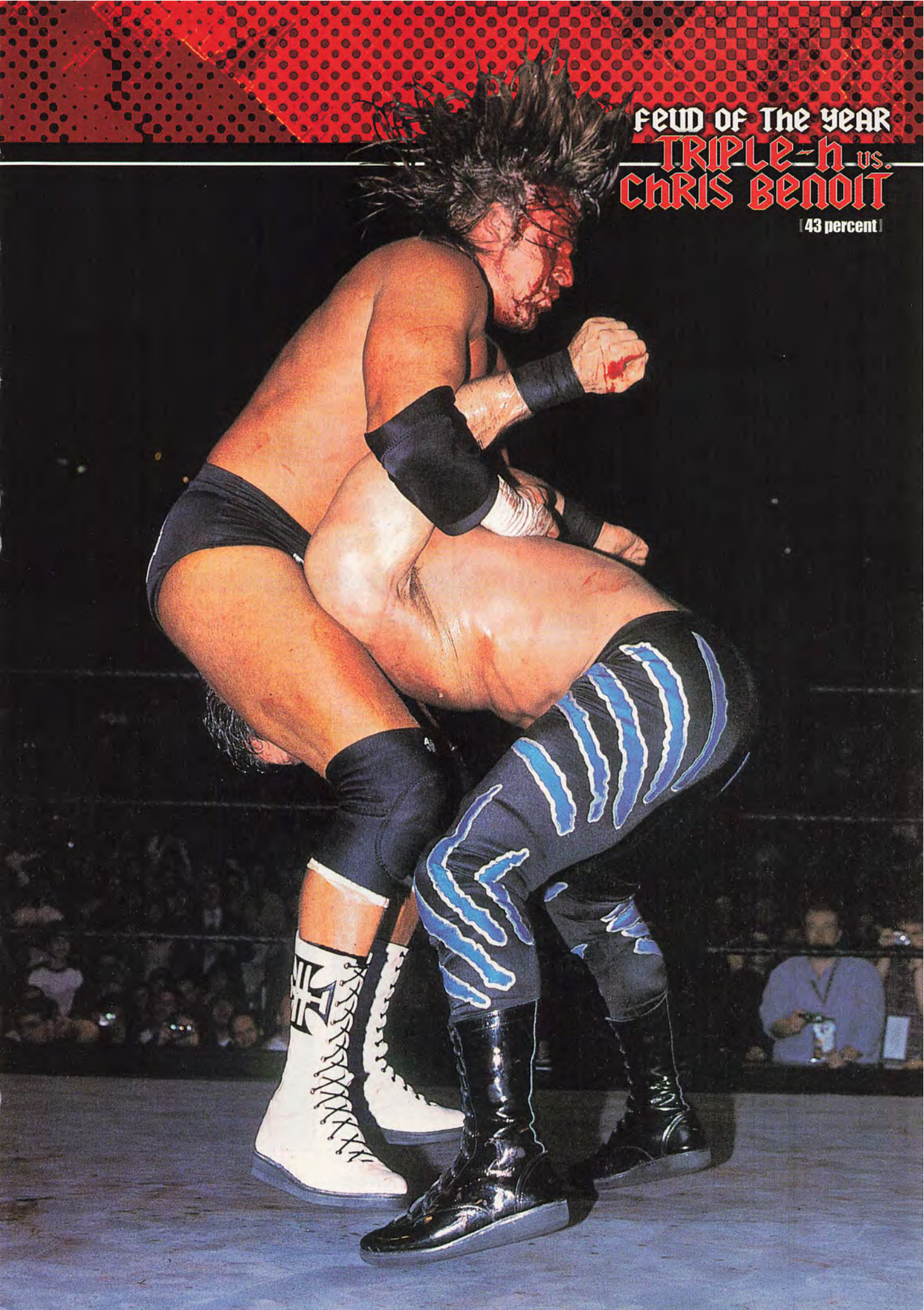
Second runner-up: It all began when Christian and Jericho—who later began feuding—started a repulsive contest to see who could get either Lita (Christian's mark) or Stratus (Jericho's mark) romantically interested first. Y2J, though, made the mistake of developing feelings for Stratus, who was humiliated when she learned of the contest. At WrestleMania, after feigning sincere interest in Jericho, she turned against him, helping Christian to an upset win. They're still at odds today!

MATT HARDY vs. KANE [5 percent]

Third runner-up: If you thought the Jericho-Stratus love story was odd, then you must have forgotten about the Hardy-Kane-Lita love *triangle*. Lita tried to protect Hardy from Kane's sadistic attack by joining him for a rendezvous in a hotel room, but all she did was get pregnant and put Hardy in harm's way again. At SummerSlam, Kane defeated Hardy in a "'Til Death Do Us Part" match, and a little more than a week later, Kane and Lita were husband and wife.

VOTES FOR OTHERS [20 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Booker T vs. John Cena, John Cena vs. Rene Dupree, Eugene vs. Triple-H, Eddie Guerrero vs. John Bradshaw Layfield, Triple-H vs. Randy Orton, Molly Holly vs. Victoria, Jeff Jarrett vs. A.J. Styles, John Bradshaw Layfield vs. The Undertaker, C.M. Punk vs. Rick Steamboat, and Raven vs. Sabu.



FEUD OF THE YEAR

TRIPLE-H vs. CHRIS BENOIT

[43 percent]

2004 PWI ACHIEVEMENT

JOHN CENA WAS the front-runner for this Achievement Award way back in the beginning of the year, and though he had lost a small percentage of his fan base by year's end, no other wrestler really came close to stealing it away from him.

Basically, it was his to lose, and he never fumbled it away.

If you recall, Cena started the year as a newly crowned fan favorite. He had just partnered with Kurt Angle, Bradshaw, Chris Benoit, and Hardcore Holly to defeat A-Train, Nathan Jones, Brock Lesnar, Matt Morgan, and The Big Show at Survivor Series to close out 2003, and he still wasn't completely sure of himself. He learned quickly, though. Less than two weeks into 2004, he had Paul Heyman in the ring and was cleaning his mouth out with soap to the roar of the crowd—which was quite ironic considering what happened a few months later.

Following the Janet Jackson Super Bowl debacle, then-Smackdown General Manager Heyman benched Cena instead of risking the wrath of the Federal Communications Commission by letting him perform his racy, explicit raps on TV—and when he returned, he seemingly forgot to bring along all of his edge. Childish bathroom jokes began to become a focal point of his freestylin'.

Most of his fans didn't care. As he surged through the rest of 2004, he was cheered louder and longer than any other wrestler on the planet. Not even a long, drawn-out best-of-five series against Booker T curbed his momentum. His merchandise flew off shelves, and when it came time to vote for this year's Achievement Awards, Cena's crew hit the ballots hard.

"John Cena represents who I am and what I'm about," said Frank Kretovich of Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. "He's true hip-hop, from the top of his retro WWE hat to the soles of his pump-me-up sneakers. He represented well all year long, and there's nobody I cheered for harder. He's the man."

Cena's standing in this category was bolstered by the fact that many of WWE's most popular performers at the start of 2004 weren't with the company by the end of the year. "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, Bill Goldberg, and Brock Lesnar departed shortly after WrestleMania. Mick Foley came and went, and The Rock doesn't qualify given his part-time status.

"My vote for John Cena is really a lack of a vote for anyone else," said Pamela Wingrod of Clarkesville, California. "I like a bunch of other wrestlers, but he's the only one who gets me excited for each and every one of his segments."

RUNNERS-UP

CHRIS BENOIT [22 percent]

First runner-up: Among wrestling purists, Chris Benoit has long been one of the sport's most popular stars. Thanks to his strong run as Raw champ in 2004, though, he finally broke through to mainstream fans. As champion, he delivered consistently spectacular main events and brought a legitimacy to the championship that had been lacking. His professionalism, work ethic, and technical ability earned the votes of fans who would normally vote for someone flashier.

EDDIE GUERRERO [19 percent]

Second runner-up: "Latino Heat" had the best year of his career in 2004. Like his good friend Chris Benoit, Guerrero pushed the limits of his popularity during his run as Smackdown champion and even convinced fans who had previously rooted against him to root for him. Perhaps the fact that he has been such an effective heel over his career (remember the Latino World Order?) prevented him from placing even higher in this category.

EUGENE [7 percent]

Third runner-up: When Eugene debuted in WWE, many industry insiders wondered, *How can WWE expect fans to take a wrestler who is mentally challenged seriously?* Well, fans *did* take Eugene seriously. They got on his bandwagon beginning in the spring and rode it all the way to the end of the year—even as his push slowed substantially. Fans who voted for him cited his general innocence and overall enthusiasm for the sport as influential factors.

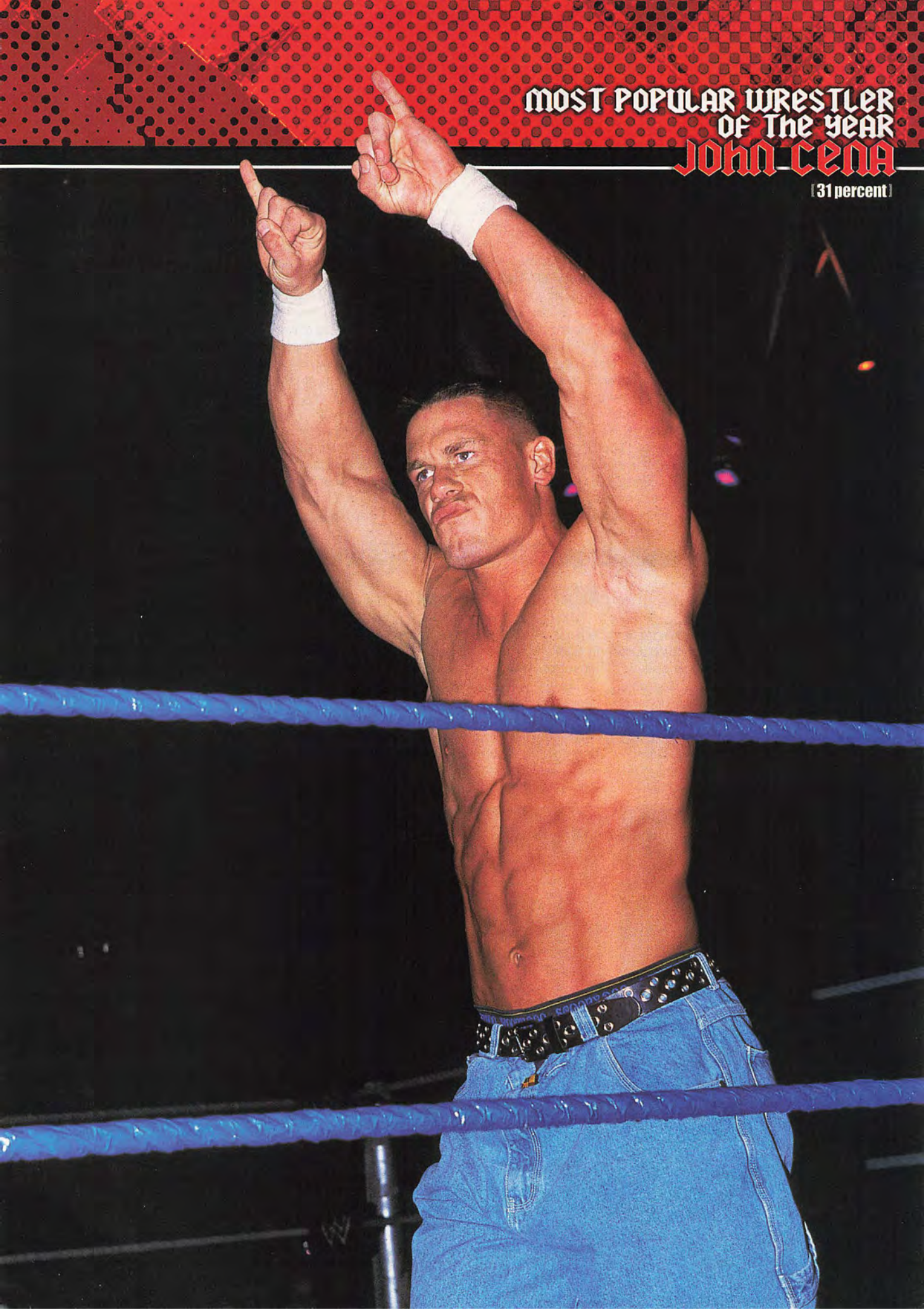
VOTES FOR OTHERS [21 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Chris Jericho, Ron Killings, Shawn Michaels, Rey Misterio Jr., A.J. Styles, The Undertaker, and Rob Van Dam.

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

JOHN CENA

[31 percent]



2004 PWI Achievement

FOR THE SECOND year in a row, Triple-H, the bane of the Internet wrestling community, takes home the *dis*honor of capturing the Most Hated Wrestler of the Year Award.

Of course, for Triple-H, being the most hated man in wrestling isn't a dishonor at all. It's actually more like "Mission accomplished." Triple-H doesn't want you to like him or his buddies, he doesn't want you rooting for him as he makes his way to the ring, and he sure as heck doesn't what you pumping your fist in the air as he scores a winning pinfall.

Helmsley relishes his role as the sport's top villain. If it were up to him, he'd probably remain a heel for the rest of his career.

"Triple-H is so easy to hate because he doesn't give you any reason to like him," wrote Jim Duncan of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. "Most other guys, they give you at least one or two reasons to be sympathetic toward them. Not Triple-H. He tells you what he's going to do and why—and they're never real good reasons—and then he goes and makes good on his word no matter the consequences. I guess you have to respect that, but you certainly don't have to like it."

Even fans who traditionally cheer for the heels don't often cheer for Triple-H. They don't appreciate the power he wields backstage, and they also don't like how he's become a virtual clone of Ric Flair circa 1984. Even though Flair has seemingly giving his blessing to WWE's uncrowned "Nature Boy," long-time Flair fans feel that Helmsley is doing Flair a disservice by pursuing "Slick" Ric's old persona so fervently.

"I grew up watching Ric Flair," wrote Robert Scope of Kingston, North Carolina. "Back then, I thought that Flair and The Four Horsemen were the best thing in wrestling because I have never seen anything like them before. What Helmsley's doing with Evolution, that's just an imitation. Flair may stand for it, but I certainly won't."

Then there are fans who are just jealous of all that Triple-H has accomplished. He's in a position everyone envies and he seemingly holds titles at will, which is why the Raw brand seems to rotate around his comings and goings so much of the time.

"I hate Triple-H because he's all over my TV!" exclaimed Sara Puntkin of Akron, Colorado. "I admit that he's a great wrestler, but enough's enough! Doesn't he know that he's not a one-man roster? Someone needs to tell him that he doesn't have to be in every other segment on TV on Monday night."

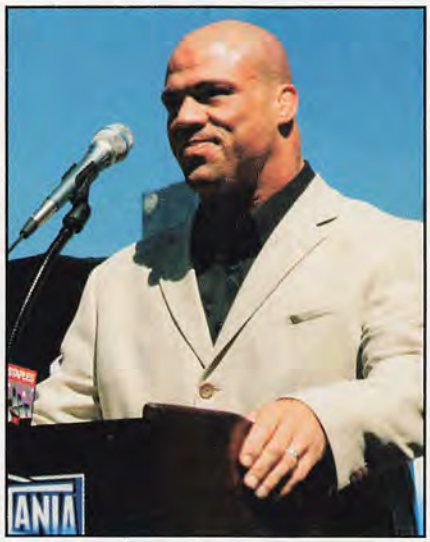
Runners-Up

JOHN BRADSHAW LAYFIELD [29 percent]

First runner-up: If anyone was going to be capable of budging Triple-H out of his top spot in this category, it sure as heck was going to be JBL. First, during a WWE tour of Germany, he provided fans fodder by stupidly performing Nazi gestures. As his Smackdown championship reign wore own, his stateside promos became highly vicious. The addition of Orlando Jordan and some humor made him more palatable, but apparently not that much more.

KURT ANGLE [11 percent]

Second runner-up: Your love-hate relationship with Angle reverted back to hate in 2004, only one year after he captured Most Popular Wrestler honors. Voters didn't like the way he handled himself as the general manager of Smackdown. They also cited his inability to stand on his own and tough it out against his competition in one-on-one matches. "I don't think I've ever seen a bigger wimp," wrote Edward Bille of De Ritter, Louisiana.

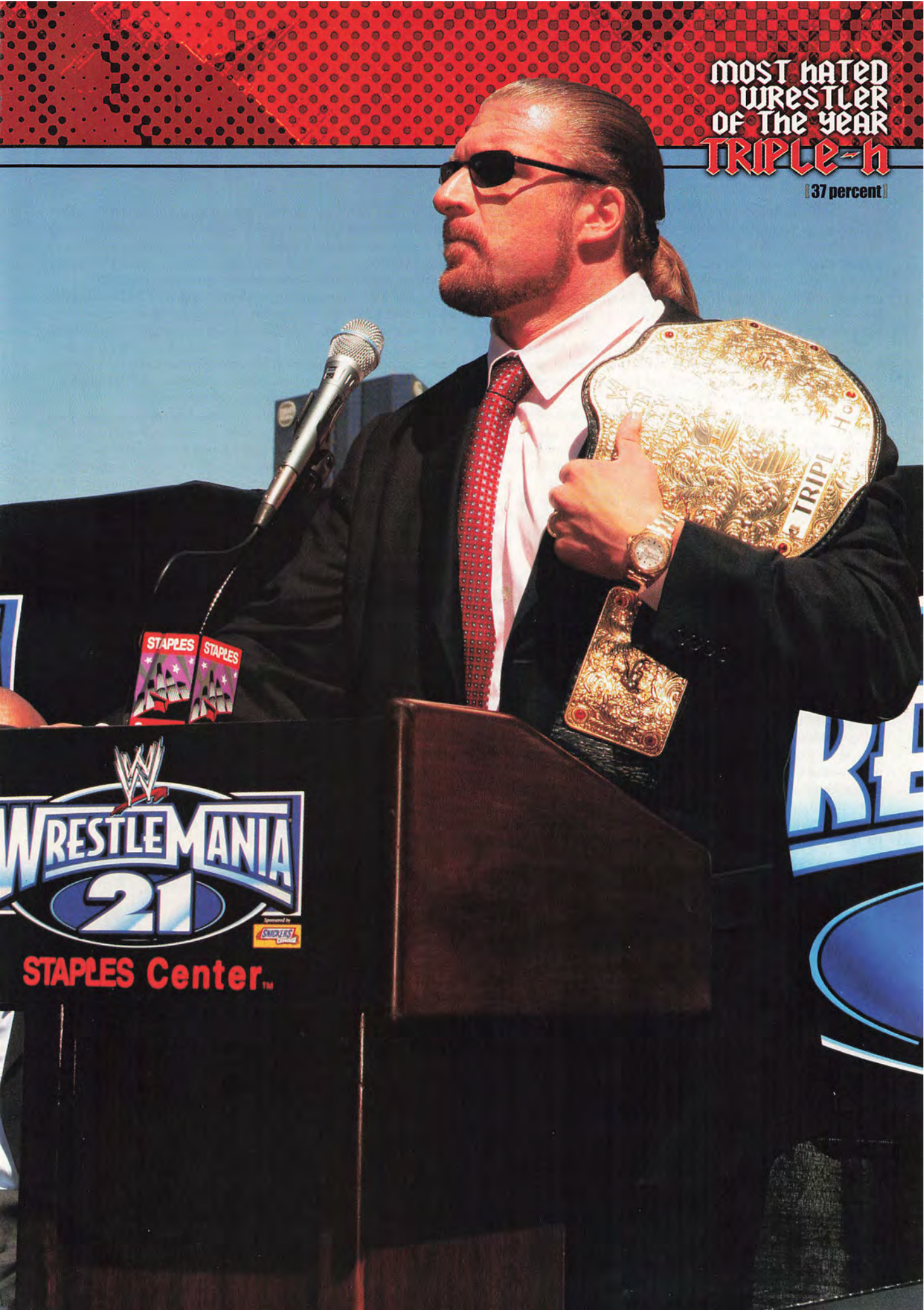


JEFF JARRETT [7 percent]

Third runner-up: Even though Jarrett is the main backstage force of Total Nonstop Action, TNA fans don't like the guy. On their ballots, many fans wrote that Jarrett makes Triple-H look reserved in his own self-promotion, which is saying a lot. They requested that Jarrett step away from the ring for a short time to allow TNA's up-and-comers to stand out and shine. "Jarrett relies on himself too much," wrote Bill Englund of Morristown, New Jersey.

VOTES FOR OTHERS [16 percent]

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Batista, Christian, Jonathan Coachman, Robert Conway & Sylvan Grenier, Spike Dudley, Heidenreich, Kane, and Trish Stratus.



MOST HATED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

TRIPLE-H

[37 percent]

2004 PWI Achievement

WHEN CHRIS BENOIT finally wrested the Raw championship out of Triple-H's arms and into his own, he made sure to do it in classic style. First, he did it at WrestleMania—the sport's biggest stage. Second, he did it in a three-way match that featured Helmsley *and* Shawn Michaels, two of the greatest wrestlers of this generation. Third, he did it by making Helmsley, who once kept wrestling after suffering an excruciating painful torn quadriceps muscle, tap out to the Crippler crossface.

The match began as expected, with Benoit and Michaels battling to be Triple-H's main aggressor. After a couple of exchanges, Benoit came at Michaels with a flurry of chops that left Michaels' chest red, Benoit's hand stinging, and Helmsley on the outside.

Benoit attempted to put away the match early with crossface on Michaels, but Michaels countered and wiggled Benoit into an unsuccessful pinfall attempt. Triple-H, sensing opportunity, immediately attacked both men simultaneously—setting up the match for what it was soon to become: a free-for-all.

Michaels connected with the first high-impact move of the match when he ascended to the top rope and then moonsaulted onto Helmsley and Benoit, who were brawling on the outside and barely had time to brace themselves for impact.

The match continued with each man taking a turn holding the advantage over his opponents, but no one was in serious jeopardy of losing the match until Benoit catapulted Michaels into the ringpost. Michaels came up bloody, and Benoit tried to capitalize by snaring him in the crossface. Triple-H smartly broke the hold before HBK could tap.

Around the 15-minute mark, the match spilled to the outside once again. Hunter threw Benoit into the steel ring barrier and began taking apart Michael Cole and Tazz' announce table. Sensing danger, Benoit scrambled toward Helmsley, tackled him onto a separate announce table, and prepared to backdrop him from one table to the other. Helmsley, however, blocked the maneuver and, together with Michaels, suplexed Benoit through the Smackdown announcers' table.

Triple-H nearly won the match with a well-timed pedigree, but Benoit regained his senses just in time to make the save. A few minutes later, Benoit surprised Michaels by ducking a superkick and dumping him outside. Triple-H tried to take advantage of the distraction by going for a pedigree on Benoit, but "The Crippler" reversed the maneuver into a crossface. The defending champion escaped the hold for a second, but Benoit quickly reapplied it. Not long after, Triple-H tapped out.

"It was simply the best WrestleMania main event ever," wrote Jason Loup of Glenvil, Nebraska.

Runners-Up

CHRIS BENOIT vs. RANDY ORTON [16 percent]

First runner-up: Randy Orton entered this SummerSlam match for Chris Benoit's Raw championship without his usual support from his buddies in Evolution. If he was going to defeat "The Crippler," he was going to have to do it on his own. Guess what! That's exactly what he did. In a fitting end that paralleled Orton's sudden rise to prominence, Orton pulled out an RKO from absolutely nowhere to score the clean pinfall and capture his first Raw title.

RANDY ORTON vs. CACTUS JACK [11 percent]

Second runner-up: If there's anything uglier than a grudge match featuring Mick Foley, it's a grudge match featuring his bloodthirsty alter-ego, Cactus Jack. In the months prior to this match, Orton had built himself up while simultaneously taking down Foley—and Jack showed up at Backlash looking for revenge. But Orton survived Jack's onslaught (which included trash cans, barbed-wire baseball bats, and thumbtacks) and sending him back into retirement with a loss.

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EDDIE GUERRERO vs. KURT ANGLE [8 percent]

Third runner-up: Eddie Guerrero is one of the sport's best mat technicians and a walking repository of the catch-as-catch-can style. Kurt Angle is a former Olympic gold medallist who usually can't be beat on the mat. Together, without a title on the line, these two mat wizards put on a wrestling clinic at SummerSlam. Guerrero nearly won with a frog splash, but in the end, it was Angle who improved his win-loss record thanks to his anklelock finisher.

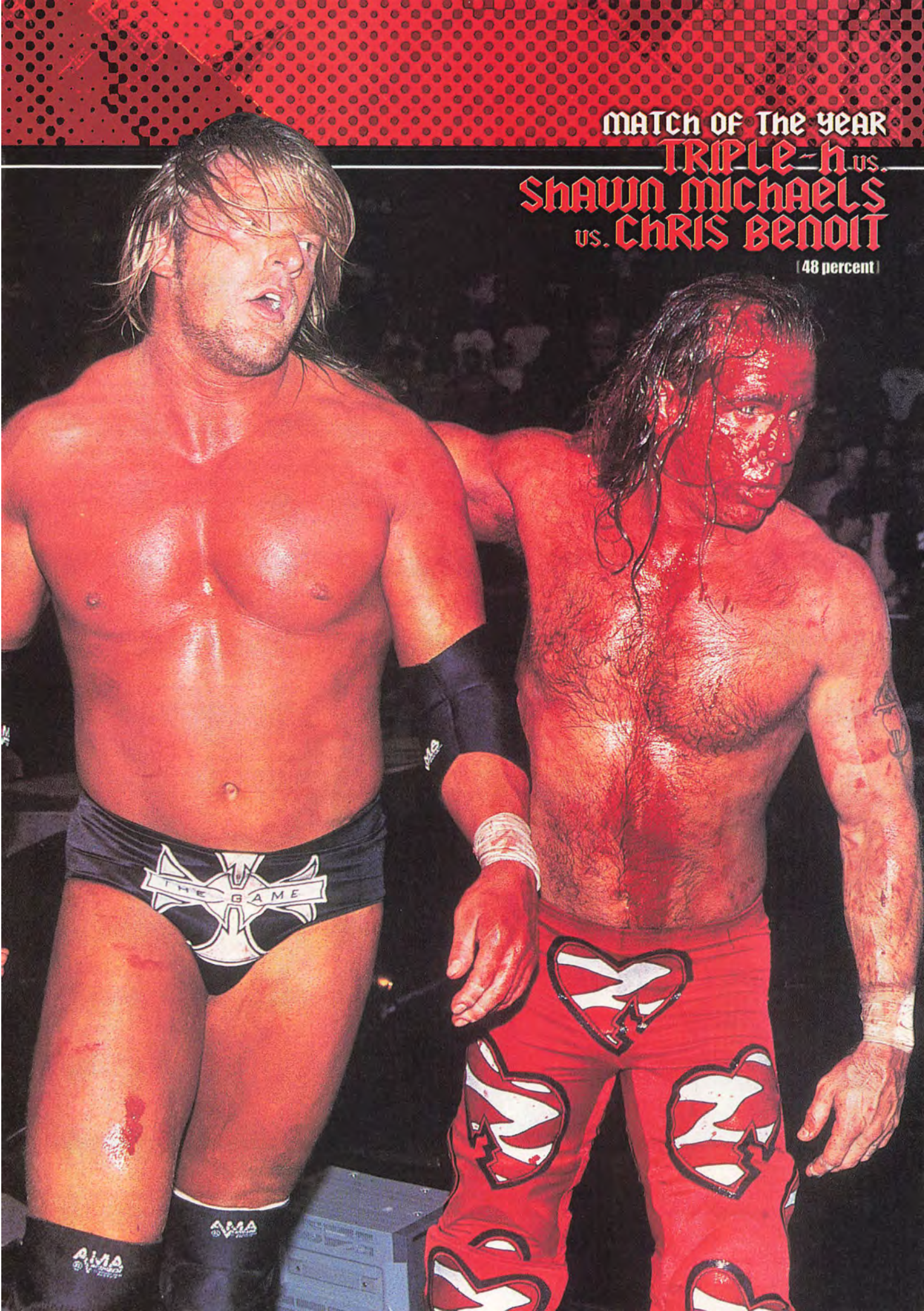
VOTES FOR OTHERS [17 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Royal Rumble (January 25), C.M. Punk vs. A.J. Styles (February 14), Chris Jericho vs. Christian (March 14), Kurt Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero (March 14), Shelton Benjamin vs. Triple-H (March 29), Samoa Joe vs. C.M. Punk (June 12), Triple-H vs. Shawn Michaels (June 13), Edge vs. Randy Orton (July 11), Austin Aries vs. Bryan Danielson (August 7), and Ric Flair vs. Randy Orton (October 19).

MATCH OF THE YEAR

TRIPLE-H vs. SHAWN MICHAELS vs. CHRIS BENOIT

(48 percent)



2004 PWI Achievement

AMERICA'S MOST WANTED, Chris Harris and James Storm, fought through a number of distractions in 2004 to capture this year's Tag Team of the Year Award—their first.

Their year started off oddly, with Harris and Storm forgoing their partnership in hopes of singles glory. Harris unsuccessfully tried to wrest away the NWA championship from Jeff Jarrett and, later, A.J. Styles, but Raven—who feuded with Harris through the first five months of the year—prevented Harris from accomplishing his mission. Storm, on the other hand, earned little singles success, but found a willing partner in "American Dream" Dusty Rhodes. As Harris pursued the NWA championship, Storm and Rhodes challenged Kid Kash and Dallas for the NWA tag team title. They failed.

One day after that unsuccessful bid by Storm and Rhodes to become tag team champions, Storm and Harris set aside their individual failures of 2004's first few months and reunited AMW during a taping of *TNA Impact*. The match? A title match against the two men who had defeated Storm and Rhodes one night earlier—Kid Kash and Dallas. To the surprise of no one, AMW defeated the defending champs and quickly regained their spot as the team to beat in TNA.

"Sure, AMW didn't partner for half the year, but they get my vote anyway," wrote Rick Kent of Union, South Carolina. "What they did, reuniting and immediately beating Kash and Dallas for the belts, proved to me that they're the best team in the sport and that no other team can compare to them. They simply know each other too well to be beaten."

Fans of AMW may be a bit lenient when it comes to their favorite team, but it's hard to ignore their win-loss record. After recapturing the tag team title, Harris and Storm successfully defended the belts in impressive fashion in matches against Johnny Swinger and Glen Gilberti, Monty Brown and Abyss, and Miyamoto and Nosawa. They only lost the championship because Andy Douglas of The Naturals used one of the title belts to knock out Storm to earn a quick pinfall just as their match was starting—and they probably would've won more titles had Storm not been forced to partner with Christopher Daniels late in the year.

"James Storm captured two NWA titles in 2004, one with Chris Harris and one with Christopher Daniels, but I think we all know that the only true team he was a part of was AMW," wrote Samuel Breckenridge of Millington, Tennessee. "Harris and Storm are better than any other combination out there—WWE included."

Runners-Up

LA Resistance [31 percent]

First runner-up: Robert Conway and Sylvan Grenier lost this category by the slimmest of margins: only one measly percentage point! Their horrible stateside demeanor must have cost the duo points, because their 2004 record is incredibly impressive. They not only captured two Raw tag team championships, but they also did so after surviving the loss of Rene Dupree to Smackdown in the beginning of the year.

The Dudley Boyz [15 percent]

Second runner-up: Buh Buh Ray and D-Von Dudley are legitimate tag team legends—and they're still one of the best. However, they held the Smackdown tag team title for less than a month in 2004, and they spent most of the year getting bullied around by little brother Spike. We're sure most of their votes came from fans who don't know how to vote for anyone else because they've been voting for the Dudleys so long.

Charlie Haas & Rico [11 percent]

Third runner-up: The oddball tandem of the ultra-serious Haas and the ultra-looney Rico (complete with the sultry Miss Jackie) made for an intriguing partnership. Their nearly two-month run as Smackdown tag team champions earned them a substantial following and showed that maybe wrestlers with different personalities do make the best partners.

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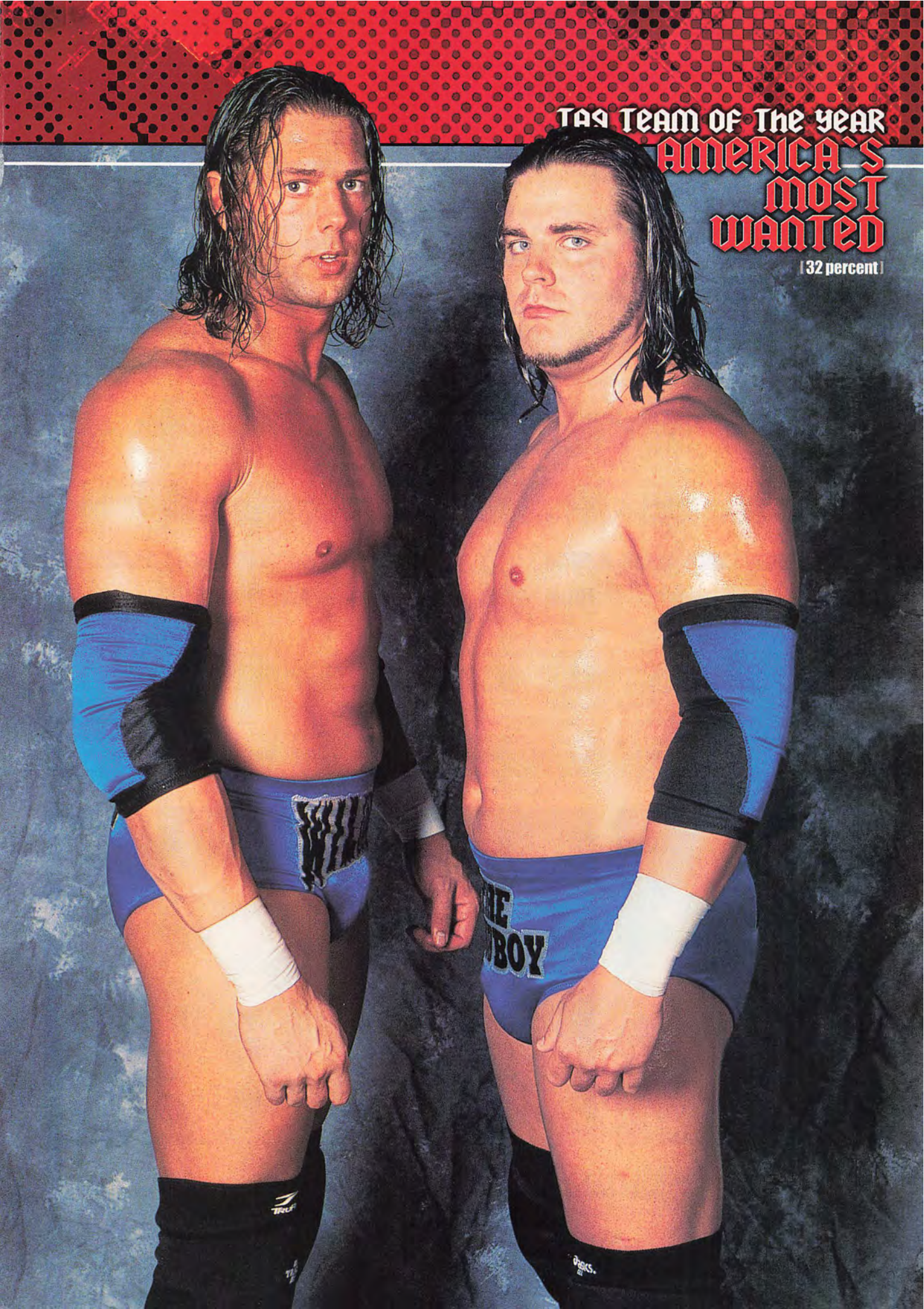
Votes for others [11 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Colt Cabana & C.M. Punk, Christopher Daniels & Elix Skipper, Ric Flair & Batista; B.G. James & Konnan, Billy Kidman & Paul London, and Rhyno & Tajiri.


TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR
AMERICA`S MOST WANTED
[32 percent]

2004 PWI Achievement

IT WASN'T EVEN close, folks. After a year in which Chris Benoit won the Raw championship and two Raw tag team championships—and came in number one in the prestigious "*PWI* 500"—you guys and girls voted him as the 2004 Wrestler of the Year by writing his name on nearly three out of four ballots.

"The Canadian Crippler," long considered the most technically proficient wrestler in the sport, finally climbed the mountain to earn one of the most prized accolades in the sport.

"Winning Wrestler of the Year is Chris Benoit's destiny," wrote Robert Edmund of Perry, New York. "Wrestlers with more popularity but less skill have been stealing Benoit's spotlight for years now, but now it's his time to stand up and take his place among wrestling's immortals. He's one of the best ever, and winning the 2004 Wrestler of the Year award will help cement that fact."

So many *PWI* readers agreed with Edmund that Benoit received more than seven times the votes of any other wrestler. Many fans cited his monumental, emotional win against Triple-H and Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania as one of their favorite moments of the year and also pointed out that he had the most impressive run of any champion this year—WWE or otherwise.

"I thought about voting for Ring of Honor's Samoa Joe, but I couldn't ignore Benoit's five-month reign as Raw champion," wrote Paul Galva of Yorkville, Illinois. "Not only did he win all his defenses cleanly, if he was wrestling a member of Evolution he also had to face the other members. He was dominant. It's as simple as that."

Just how dominant? Not only did he beat Helmsley and Michaels in a three-way at WrestleMania to win the championship by making Triple-H tap out, he beat them in a second three-way match at Backlash by making Michaels to tap out to retain the title! Then, not too long after Backlash, he captured the Raw tag team championship with Edge and was forced to defend that title while also making defenses of his Raw championship!

"Benoit made title defenses for two different titles for more than a month, and the only reason his dual championship reign didn't last longer was because Edge mistakenly speared him to give La Resistance a cheap win," wrote Chris Webb of Stanley, Oklahoma. "It's hard to imagine that his year could've been more impressive than it was."

Chris Benoit. Wrestler of the Year. Enough said.

Runners-Up

RANDY ORTON [9 percent]

First runner-up: This year's Most Improved Wrestler of the Year garnered an impressive (and shocking) vote count for Wrestler of the Year, nearly capturing 1 out of every 10 votes. Apparently, his short one-month run as Raw champion and his more extended reign as Intercontinental champion convinced some fans that he had the best 12 months of any wrestler alive last year. How many votes will he garner next year if he performs even better?

EDDIE GUERRERO [9 percent]

Second runner-up: If there's anything shocking about 2004's Wrestler of the Year voting, it's that Guerrero wound up so far behind Chris Benoit in the vote count and even slightly behind Randy Orton. He beat the indomitable Brock Lesnar for the Smackdown championship, and he also had successful defenses against Kurt Angle and The Big Show before losing the title to John Bradshaw Layfield. Short of campaigning, what else could he have done for more votes?

A.J. STYLES [6 percent]

Third runner-up: For the second year in a row, A.J. Styles has captured the third runner-up spot in Wrestler of the Year voting. Most fans who voted for him didn't do so because of his stellar championship record, but because of his all-around ability and his impact on TNA. "Styles was TNA's 2004 MVP," wrote Mark Gregg of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. "He carried the promotion even when he didn't have gold around his waist."

VOTES FOR OTHERS [4 percent]

Some of the other top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Triple-H, Jeff Jarrett, John Bradshaw Layfield, and Samoa Joe.

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

CHRIS BENOIT

[72 percent]

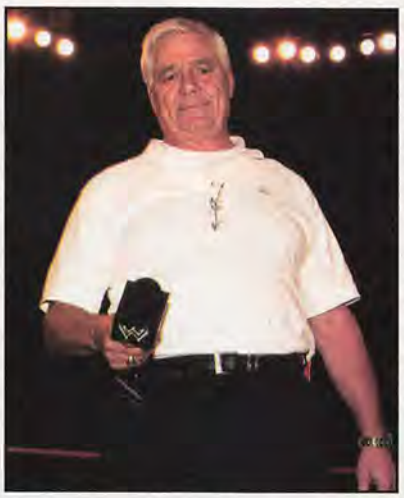
2004 PWI Achievement: Stanley Weston Award

Pat Patterson

IT WAS FITTING that Pat Patterson belted out his version of the Frank Sinatra classic "My Way"—one of his favorite songs—on his last night with WWE this fall. Whether as a wrestler, commentator, creative force, or even a stooge, Patterson did things his way. And his way was a great way.

Patterson began wrestling in the early-1960s under the name "Pretty Boy" Pat Patterson. Donning pink trunks and lipstick, he enraged the fans with his effeminate antics. He did it for the same reason he did many things throughout his career. Patterson loved getting a reaction from the crowd. It was the desire to hear an audience unite to cheer or boo that fueled him.

During wrestling's territorial days, Patterson was a legend in California. Besides being a six-time United States champion (California version) and 11-time tag team champion in San Francisco, Patterson was victorious in the prestigious 1975 Cow Palace battle royal. In an era in which battle royals weren't common occurrences, a win like this meant a great deal to a man's career. Ironically, this win and his triumph in the same event six years later served as precursors for bigger things to come. Thirteen years later after that first battle royal victory, Patterson would be credited for revolutionizing the battle royal concept and presenting it in a new format: the highly successful WWF Royal Rumble.



But that was after he retired as a competitor. In 1979, Patterson became the first WWF Intercontinental champion. As the company's final North American champion, Patterson relinquished that gold in favor of the newly created I-C title. It was an achievement that he would declare proudly throughout his career and look back on as one of his finest moments.

Two years later, after losing the title to Ken Patera, Patterson waged a war on the despicable Sgt. Slaughter. The two men embarked on a tour of blood and gore from arena to arena all over the WWF circuit. With Sarge doing everything he could to agitate the audience, Patterson stood by the fans and played the role of hero wonderfully. Their long string of "boot camp" matches culminated in an amazing battle at Madison Square Garden in 1981. To this day, some long-time fans still point to that match as one of the most exciting showdowns in the history of modern wrestling.

Patterson began to transition from active wrestler to executive in the early-1980s. He joined Vince McMahon as a color commentator for the WWF's syndicated television shows and hosted an interview segment for the company's French broadcasts. All of this went on until 1984, when he retired from active competition. He joined McMahon's inner circle and was responsible for many important creative decisions and recommendations. Helping to sculpt cards and to present matches to fans in the most appealing and logical way possible, Patterson showed that he had a brilliant understanding of the industry. He gained respect from his peers both in the locker room and in the office by making sure his voice was heard.

In 1998, after nearly 15 years of retirement, Patterson made a comeback to on-air duty. His persona was ironic, to say the least. Alongside Gerald Brisco, he played the role of one of McMahon's bumbling stooges/yes-men. He played his part for laughs and did what he could—which, in many cases, wasn't much—to protect the evil Mr. McMahon from Steve Austin and other oppressed WWF fan favorites. The funniest aspect of all this is that Patterson was anything but a yes-man. He stood up for his convictions and had a strong voice in the booking of the company to which he devoted a large portion of his life.

However, playing the stooge character showed Patterson's willingness to poke fun at himself. He's participated in some of the most outrageous moments in recent WWE history. Numerous run-ins with Mae Young and an evening gown match against Brisco just illustrated the diversity of his skills.

Whether it was spilling Sgt. Slaughter's blood all over Madison Square Garden, delivering a customized version of Rikishi's stinkface, or giving young (or veteran) wrestlers advice on how to put together a memorable performance, Pat Patterson gave his all. In the end, Patterson did whatever he could do to support the wrestling industry.

That is what makes Patterson, already a WWE and *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Famer, a deserving recipient of the Stanley Weston Award. His unending desire to entertain fans and send them home happy coupled with his amazing success both in the ring and behind the scenes all helped to solidify him as an integral part of WWE's success over the last three decades. □

YOUR UNOFFICIAL/OFFICIAL AWARDS FOR 2004

Once again we have asked our readers to create their own awards and name the person, organization, etc. most deserving of those awards. It's our annual showcase of our fans' creativity, our way of dubiously honoring those involved with our fine sport

American Bald Eagle: Kurt Angle
—Steve McLamb, Salemburg, NC

$194,000,000: (tie) The New York Yankees' 2004 payroll and The Big Show's 2004 food budget
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

A Face Like Three Days Of Bad Weather: Gene Snitsky
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

All That Hype For This?: Mordecai
—johnstein@charter.net

America's Least Wanted: La Resistance
—John C. Womack, Philadelphia, PA

Am I Too Late To Join Kai-entai?: Kenzo Suzuki
—Frederick Scott, Boise, ID

Andy Rooney Award For Bitter Old Men: Ric Flair
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

Are You Sure That Isn't Razor Ramon With An Afro Wig?: Carlito Caribbean Cool
—Adam Loy, Burlington, NC

As A Boston Red Sox Fan, I Can Relate All Too Well: David Young's winless streak
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

As John Wayne Would Say, "I'm Looking At A Tin Star With A Drunk Pinned On It": Sheriff "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

As My Stomach Turns: Kane, Lita, and Matt Hardy love triangle
—Frederick Scott, Boise, ID

At Least Nikolai Volkoff Could Actually Sing: La Resistance
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Battle Of The Five-Fingered Hands: John Cena vs. Booker T
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Biggest Waste Of $250,000: Raw diva search
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

Big Hat, Big Limo. What Would Freud Say?: John Bradshaw Layfield
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

Boy, Can He Pick 'Em: Steve Austin and his girlfriends
—Michael Richards, Granite Falls, NC

Don't Worry, It's Covered By The Warranty: Gail Kim's leaky breast implant
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Best Rear View: Robert Conway
—Megan Terrell, Pennsboro, WV

Dull Man Walking: Undertaker
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Egosaurus Flex: Triple-H
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Fallen Angel, Rising Star: Christopher Daniels
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

Finally (Part I): Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit get title pushes
—C.J. Bowman, fireproof_messenjah@yahoo.com

He's Still Looking For Changes In Dad's Will: Shane McMahon
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

Finally (Part II): WWE decides to use Paul London
—C.J. Bowman, fireproof_messenjah@yahoo.com

Go Ahead, Punk, Make My Day: Rick Steamboat
—John C. Womack, Philadelphia, PA

Gone But Will Never Be Forgotten: Big Bossman
—Sean Stein, seannwo@hotmail.com

Goodbye, Goodbye, and Goodbye: Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg with "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin as the special guest referee at WrestleMania XX
—johnstein@charter.net

Greatest Football Player-Turned-Wrestler Since Ron Simmons: Monty Brown
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Has Lied, Cheated, And Stolen More Than Any Enron Executive: Eddie Guerrero
—James Bullock, Richmond, VA

Hell Must Be Freezing Over: WWE has talks with Bruno Sammartino and Bret Hart
—William E. Wright III, Pearl City, HI

He Must Live On Adrian Street: Rico
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Hey, Yo, You Stole My Gimmick: Carlito Caribbean Cool
—Dan Staiger, dstaiger@earthlink.net

His Favorite Breakfast Cereal Is Special K: Eugene
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

His Gimmick? Greatness: Chris Benoit
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

His Hair Is Thinning, His Waistline Isn't: Ric Flair
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Holy Bible Kid: Shawn Michaels
—James Bullock, Richmond, VA

Hope You're Not Still Living In That Promoter's Attic (As Seen In *Beyond The Mat*): Michael Modest
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

Hottest Newlyweds Since Jessica Simpson And Nick Lachey: Kane and Lita
—Bobby Pitts, San Jose, CA

Has More Paint On Him Than Sherwin-Williams: Jeff Hardy
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

How Long Before His Next Comeback?: "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin
—C.J. Bowman, fireproof_messenjah@yahoo.com

I Demand A Recount!: Taboo Tuesday
—Steve Walles, Stoneham, MA

I'd Hate To See How He Establishes Dominance: "Alpha Male" Monty Brown
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

I'd Hate To See What Happens When He Hits The Fan: Rosey, Super Hero In Training
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

If All The Commentators Weren't Rednecks, And If They Didn't Film

It In Front Of 500 Fans, And If They Didn't Push Has-Beens Like Roddy Piper And Miscasts Like Jeff Hardy, And If I Could Remember When It Was On, I'd Actually Probably Watch It And Maybe Even Like It: TNA's Friday afternoon program (whatever it's called)
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

If He's In Evolution, Why Hasn't He Evolved Into Quadruple-H?: Triple-H
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

I Guess His Biscuits Weren't Burned After All: Kane impregnates Lita
—James Bullock, Richmond, VA

I Just Hope The Big Show Wasn't At The Funeral: Big Bossman
—Bobby Pitts, San Jose, CA

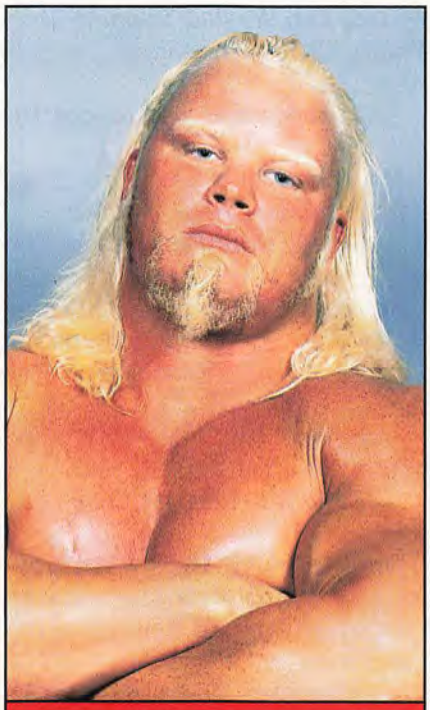
In His Case, NFL Meant "Not For Long": Brock Lesnar
—Bobby Pitts, San Jose, CA

It Didn't Fool Anybody 20 Years Ago, What Makes You Think It Will Work Now?: Dusty Rhodes as The Midnight Rider in TNA
—Sean Stein, seannwo@hotmail.com

It Didn't Work For Luger 11 Years Ago, What Makes You Think It Will Work For You Now?: "Reflection Of Perfection" Mark Jindrak
—Shaun Stirneman, ststriker@yahoo.com

I Thought We Finally Got Rid Of Test: Gene Snitsky
—Dan Staiger, dstaiger@earthlink.net

It's About Damn Time: Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero winning world championships
—johnstein@charter.net



If He Walked In A Snowstorm, He'd Be Invisible: Mordecai
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

It's Safe To Say He's Pro-Choice: Gene Snitsky
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

It's Safe To Say He Wasn't Into Corpses After All: Kane
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

It Takes A "Special" Wrestler To Beat Triple-H: Eugene
—John C. Womack, Philadelphia, PA

It Wouldn't Have Been Any Good Even If Ben Stiller Was The Special Guest Referee: Diva dodge ball at SummerSlam
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

Jessica Simpson Award For The Woman Most Responsible For Keeping Blonde Jokes Alive: Trish Stratus
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

John Lennon "Another Year Over/And What Have You Done?": Rob "Mr. Mid-Card" Van Dam
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

Keep Marching, Crusader—Straight Out The Door: Mordecai
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

Latina Sweet: Nidia
—John C. Womack, Philadelphia, PA

Like The Rock: Randy Orton
—Michael Richards, Granite Falls, NC

Johnny Needs A New Gimmick: Johnny Nitro
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Rich Woman Most Likely To Drink A Beer Through A Straw: Goldylocks
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

Live (?) From New York, It's ...: The return of The Undertaker at WrestleMania XX
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

More Hollywood Than Hogan: The Rock
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

More Retarded Than Eugene: JBL's title push
—C.J. Bowman, fireproof_messenjah@yahoo.com

More Scars Than Skin: Ian Rotten
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Most Deserving Of A Mae Young Stinkface: Michael Cole
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Most Likely To Replace Funaki As "Smackdown *Num-bah* One *Announ-cah*": Kenzo Suzuki
—Steve Walles, Stoneham, MA

Most Mismanaged, Under-utilized, And Wasted Talent In The History Of Pro Wrestling: The Big Show
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

Mr. Burns and Smithers: Eric Bischoff and Jonathan Coachman
—Ricky Gonzales, Toledo, OH

Mr. Mundane Night: Lance Storm
—John C. Womack, Philadelphia, PA

New York City's Metropolitan Moron: John Bradshaw Layfield
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

Nick Bockwinkel Award For Long And Boring Service As A So-Called World Champion: Samoa Joe
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

No Longer A Fan Of Team Canada: Elix Skipper
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Not Only Can She Sing, But She Hit The Big Legdrop On Hillary Duff: Brooke Hogan
—Bobby Pitts, San Jose, CA

Penalty—Fifteen Yards For Impersonating A Football Player: Brock Lesnar
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Proof That A Resume Doesn't Always Get You The Job: Christian
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Proof That Third Generation's The Charm: Randy Orton
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Proof That WWE Is Reaching Out To The 20-Life Demographic: Heidenreich's poem to Michael Cole
—johnstein@charter.net

Racing Neck-And-Neck Toward Career Ending Injury: Edge and Kurt Angle
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Razor Ramon 2.0: Carlito Caribbean Cool
—johnstein@charter.net

Ring Of Dishonor: Rob Feinstein
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

Ruining Monday Nights For Everybody: Triple-H
—B.J. Kelly, Plainsboro, NJ

Same Old Tired Tune: Jeff Jarrett
—James Lee, New Haven, CT

So He *Is* Really Crazy: The Warrior putting one of his WWE title belts on eBay with a starting bid of $23,000
—Sean Stein, seannwo@hotmail.com

The Coolest Wrestler Of The Year: Frankie Kazarian
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

SpongeBobCheckeredPants: Chris Jericho
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Stand By Your Bigot: Vince McMahon refuses to punish John Bradshaw Layfield's use of a Nazi salute in Germany
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

Still Creepy After All These Years: Christian
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Still Waiting For Him To Ride The Short Bus To The Arena With The WWE Creative Team: Eugene
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

Straight Edge Superstar: C.M. Punk
—G. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Take Your Clothes Off!: Randy Orton
—James Cavanagh, Middletown, NY

Talk About A Waste Of Frequent Flyer Miles: Jeff Jarrett goes to Japan to smash a guitar over Hulk Hogan's head to set up a match that never happens
—Ricky Gonzales, Toledo, OH

The Has-Been Tag Team Of The Year: Hardcore Holly and Billy Gunn
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

The New Norman: Eugene
—Steve Walles, Stoneham, MA

The Next Psycho Sid ... No, That's Not A Compliment: Heidenreich
—Dan Staiger, dstaiger@earthlink.net

The Only WWE Broadcast Journalist That I Wish Would Have A Wardrobe Malfunction: Ivory
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

The Point Of This Was ... ?: The draft lottery after WrestleMania
—Sean Stein, seannwo@hotmail.com

There Really Is A Reason We Still Watch Wrestling: Benoit wins the Raw title at WrestleMania XX
—Sarah Greene, Sweet Home, OR

The Winner Of The Jim Neidhart Best Goatee Award: Tyson Tomko
—Bobby Pitts, San Jose, CA

Twenty Years From Now, He'll Be The Answer On A Trivia Card: Eugene
—Sarah Greene, Sweet Home, OR

Ugliest Stage Mom: Hulk Hogan for Brooke Hogan
—William E. Wright III, Pearl City, HI

Virgil 2.0: Orlando Jordan
—johnstein@charter.net

We Might Have To Start Calling Him Mrs. Heidenreich: Michael Cole
—Barry Boudreaux, Houma, LA

Where's Norman Bates When You Need Him?: Mae Young in Trish Stratus' shower
—Tom Smail, Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Whose Bed Hasn't She Slept In?: Goldylocks
—Ronald Bush, Brooklyn, NY

Why Do Rosey And Hurricane Have WWE Contracts When These Guys Don't?: Christopher Daniels and Raven
—Mike Messier, Providence, RI

The New F'n Underrated Wrestler: Chris Sabin
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Wimpin' Ain't Easy: Kurt Angle
—John C. Womack, Philadelphia, PA

Wonder If There's Any Relation To Christina?: Aaron Aguilera
—Matthew Drew, Durham, NC

Worse than HLA: JBL as WWE Smackdown champion
—William E. Wright III, Pearl City, HI

Worst WWE Drag Queen Since Cloudy: Steven Richards
—johnstein@charter.net

Wrestling's Unsolved Mystery: John Heidenrich's "Little Johnny"
—johnstein@charter.net

You Paid Him To Do That?: Dennis Rodman's appearance on *Impact*
—Sean Stein, seannwo@hotmail.com □

2004 PWI Achievement

What do our readers think will happen in the world of professional wrestling during the next 12 months? Once again we asked them, and as usual, our armchair prophets came through with some bizarre ideas. Will anyone's 2005 predictions come true? Check this issue next year to find out!

Jerry "The King" Lawler will suffer multiple broken bones and internal injuries falling up the ring steps in his haste to be the first to join **Torrie Wilson's** "Kiss *My* Ass" Club. Weakened and unable to defend himself, Lawler will then be attacked by **Mae Young** and subjected to the "bronco buster from hell." "The King's" troubles won't be over, though, as he'll be placed in an ambulance and find a waiting **Heidenreich**, dressed as a nurse, preparing to take his temperature. On the way to the hospital, the ambulance will be rammed by a stolen limo (License plate: **JBL**) driven by a jealous **Michael Cole** ... Furthering his quest to surpass **Ric Flair's** record 16 world title reigns, **Triple-H** will pin himself for the belt in the one-man main event at SummerSlam. The next night on *Raw,* he will claim the pin came after an illegal sledgehammer shot to the groin and demand an immediate rematch. *Raw's* main event will see "The Game" regain the title by forcing himself to tap out to an abdominal stretch. **Jim Ross** will state, "Triple-H should pass Flair's record by Friday at this rate," but it won't be until Survivor Series, where he'll wrestle himself in all nine matches, that Triple-H will finally break Flair's record by winning three of five falls in the "one-man, 60-minute Ironman streetfight-on-a-ladder-in-the-cell" main event ... **The Necro Butcher** will win Ring of Honor's pure wrestling title ... In an exclusive interview with ace reporter **Shane Helms**, **Fabulous Moolah** will admit she had an affair years ago with **Doink the Clown** and that **Eugene** is their love child! Asked if that meant Eugene's "uncle," **Eric Bischoff**, was, indeed, her brother, Citizen Moolah will reply: "Hey! That creepy little freak was adopted through mail order and we were disappointed with him as soon as he arrived because we ordered a midget!" *Whatsupwiddat*?

—Gord Laidlaw, Hamilton, Ontario

Jeff Jarrett will show up in WWE and battle **Triple-H** to see who is the most selfish champion in the world today ... Speaking of returns, **Brock Lesnar** will return, but will recruit **Steve McMichael** and **Kevin Greene** for the "NFL Invasion" ... **Eugene** will become the new GM of Raw by beating **Eric Bischoff** and will still do a better job than Bischoff did when he ran WCW ... **Randy Orton** will become the true "Legend Killer" by defeating his own father, **"Cowboy" Bob Orton Jr.**, at WrestleMania ... **Rob Van Dam** will win the Smackdown title at SummerSlam ... **Eddie Guerrero** will host *Pimp My Ride* ... **The Rock** won't be the only wrestler in Hollywood, as a remake of *The Pink Panther* will be released, starring **Rene Dupree** as **Inspector Clouseau.**

—Bobby Pitts, San Jose, CA

Edge will finally become a serious contender to the WWE Raw title and will win it by SummerSlam ... **Ric Flair** will continue to be a pompous jackass ... **John Bradshaw Layfield** will also continue to be a pompous jackass ... **Rob Van Dam** will win the U.S. title and will totally embarrass **John Cena** on his way to winning it ... **Chris Jericho** will finally get pissed off about constantly being overlooked and not getting world title matches. He will demand a world title match and get it ... **Jeff Hardy** will win the NWA title and then go on to have an awesome feud with **Jeff Jarrett** ... **Jerry Lynn** will continue to be one of the world's most underrated wrestlers ... **Randy Orton** will win the Royal Rumble ... **The Undertaker** will win again at WrestleMania ... **Christian** will continue to wrestle at a first-class level, but the higher-ups in

WWE will still continue to keep him at the mid-card level.

—Ken Sawicki, Lethbridge, Alberta

I will rise and conquer and get into wrestling ... **Michael Cole** and **Heidenreich** will get married ... **The Undertaker** will be buried and never come back ... TNA will last just one more year ... **Buff Bagwell** won't come back to either WWE or TNA ... I will kill my computer and marry **Paul London**.

—Denise Carter, Stony Plain, Alberta

Chris Benoit will return to Smackdown and feud with **Eddie Guerrero** over the heavyweight title ... **John Cena** and **Lilian Garcia** will each release albums ... Fox Sports Net will give TNA a Wednesday night time slot ... **Sting** will replace **Eric Bischoff** as Raw GM ... **Hulk Hogan** will finally debut in TNA ... **Bret Hart** and **Bruno Sammartino** will be two of the inductees into the WWE Hall of Fame ... **Shawn Michaels** will announce his retirement in 2005 and his intention to become a minister ... **Kane** and **Lita** will divorce after **Molly Holly** reveals that she's carrying Kane's baby ... To boost the WWE tag team division on Raw, the company will sign **The Shane Twins** and **The Stampede Bulldogs**, and for Smackdown, it will sign **The S.A.T.** and **The Ballard Brothers** ... **Kurt Angle** will jump to Raw and beat **Triple-H** for the Raw title at SummerSlam ... **Brock Lesnar** will sign with TNA, but only after he unsuccessfully tries to become both a pro baseball and a pro basketball player ... **Paul Heyman** will leave WWE and join 3PW ... USA Network will give a Tuesday night time slot to Ring of Honor ... The Smackdown cruiserweight division will add **Teddy Hart**, **The Amazing Red**, **Psicosis**, and **C.M. Punk**.

—Steve Kardolly, Olanta, PA

A DNA test will reveal that **Eugene's** long-lost father is **George "The Animal" Steele** ... **Simon Dean** will bring in **"Playboy" Buddy Rose** to be his manager and then bring back **Chris Candido** and **Tammy Sytch** as **The New Bodydonnas** ... Both **Bret Hart** and **Bruno Sammartino** will return to WWE and will face off in a debate over who is more bitter toward **Vince McMahon** and WWE ... **Vampiro** and **Sabu** will debut with Smackdown, viciously attacking **The Undertaker**. They will be known as **The New Ministry of Darkness** and will be joined by **Mordecai**, **Gangrel**, **Viscera**, **Midian**, **Sean O'Haire**, and **Abdullah the Butcher**. It will eventually be revealed that **Jake "The Snake" Roberts** is the mastermind behind the new group ... **Mike the Miz** will win *Tough Enough 4* and will become the cruiserweight champion, defeating **Spike Dudley** for the title at WrestleMania 21 ... **Edge** will bring back **Buff Bagwell** so we can hear both of them complain about why they don't get a title shot ... **Raven** will finally win the NWA title from **Jeff Jarrett** ... **Sonny Siaki** will debut with Smackdown and team with **Carlito Caribbean Cool** ... **Brock Lesnar** will become so desperate that he will try out for the local Minnesota flag football team and get cut after trying to F5 all of his teammates ... After making fun of **Lita** for all of those months, **Trish Stratus** will find out that she is pregnant and the father will be one of **The Bushwhackers**, **Outback Jack**, **Max Mini**, **Kamala**, or **Eugene**.

—David Larrick, Ambridge, PA

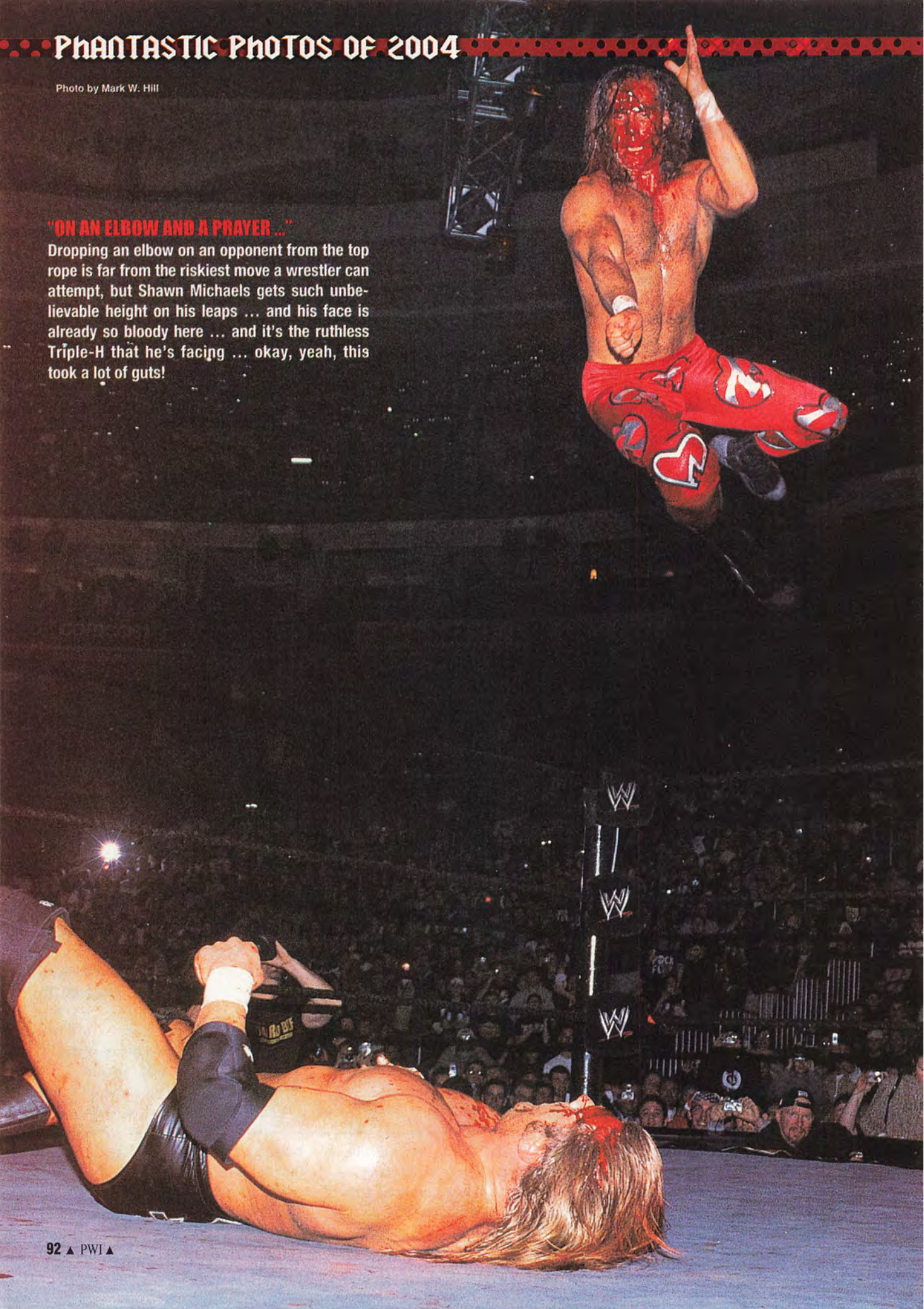
Vince McMahon will undergo surgery for a blocked colon and **Triple-H's** head will be pulled out ... It will be discovered that **Eugene** is really a genius and he will become Raw GM ... After ratings and house show attendance hit an all-time low, Vince will realize that bigger isn't better and finally put the cruiserweights in the spotlight ... **Trish Stratus** will become pregnant and give birth to a "creepy little bastard" ... Survivor Series will live up to its name and be held in Madison Square Garden on back-to-back nights, with teams of four competing the first night to crown new champions after the titles are vacated. Then, on the second night, singles matches will take place, with some stars wrestling three or four matches to fill the vacant world championships.

—Richard Teitje, Holgate, OH

Triple-H and **Stephanie McMahon** will get divorced ... **Ric Flair** will leave **Evolution**. He will then go on to win the Royal Rumble, lasting longer than he did in 1992. At WrestleMania 21, Flair will defeat **Triple-H** for the Raw title, beginning his 17th world title reign.

—Megan Terrell, Pennsboro, WV □

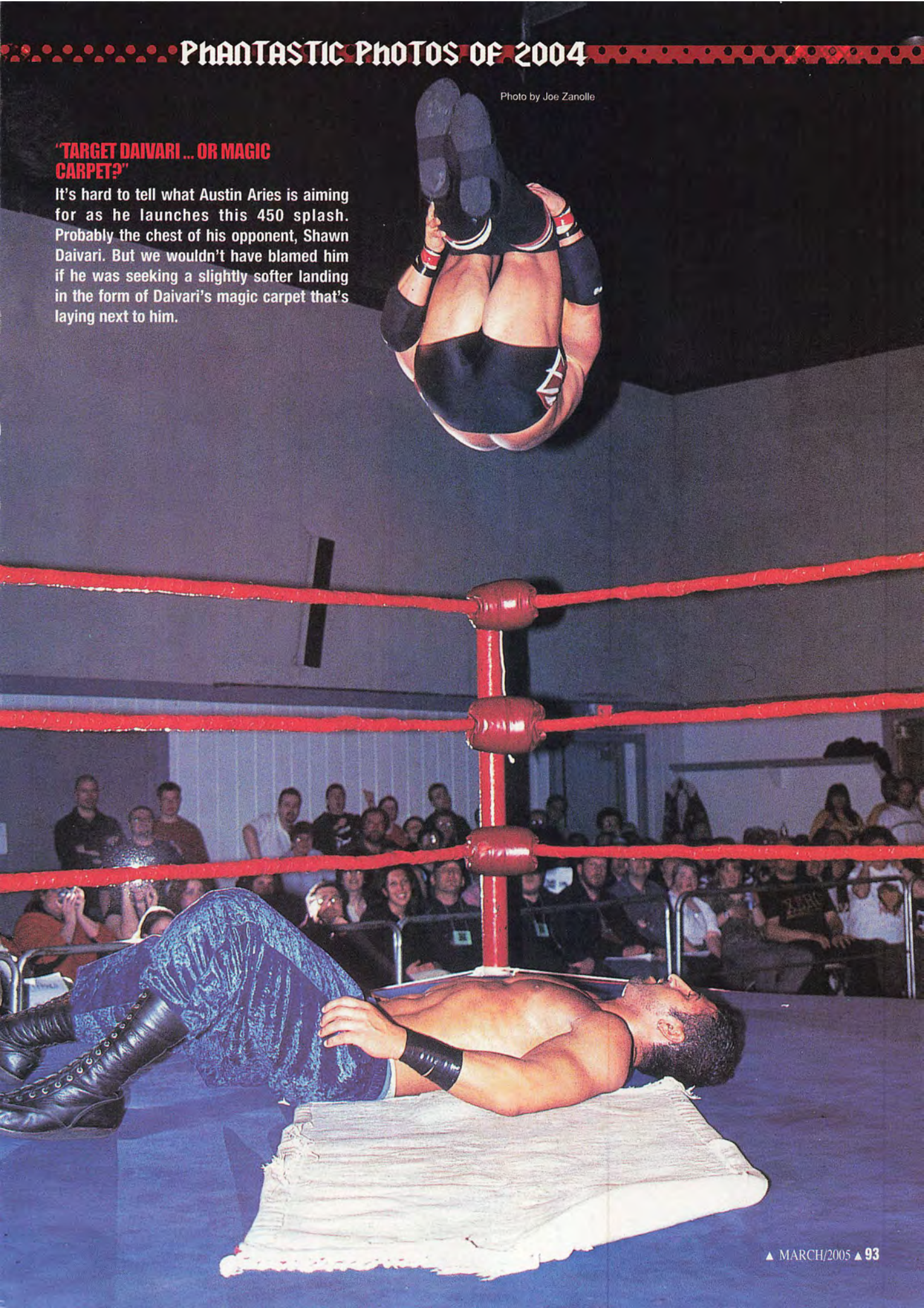
Photo by Mark W. Hill



"ON AN ELBOW AND A PRAYER ..."

Dropping an elbow on an opponent from the top rope is far from the riskiest move a wrestler can attempt, but Shawn Michaels gets such unbelievable height on his leaps ... and his face is already so bloody here ... and it's the ruthless Triple-H that he's facing ... okay, yeah, this took a lot of guts!

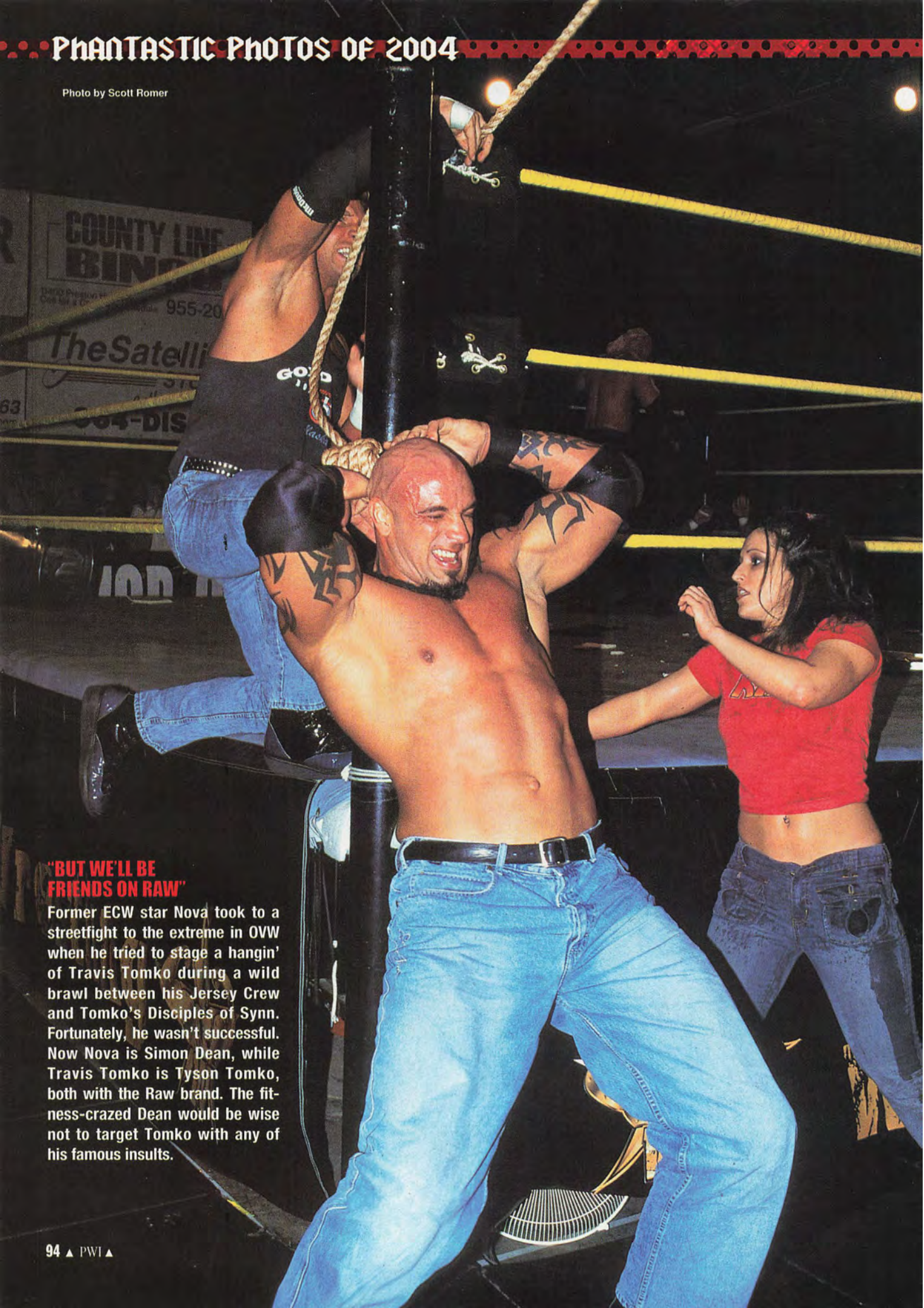
Photo by Joe Zanolle



"TARGET DAIVARI ... OR MAGIC CARPET?"

It's hard to tell what Austin Aries is aiming for as he launches this 450 splash. Probably the chest of his opponent, Shawn Daivari. But we wouldn't have blamed him if he was seeking a slightly softer landing in the form of Daivari's magic carpet that's laying next to him.

Photo by Scott Romer

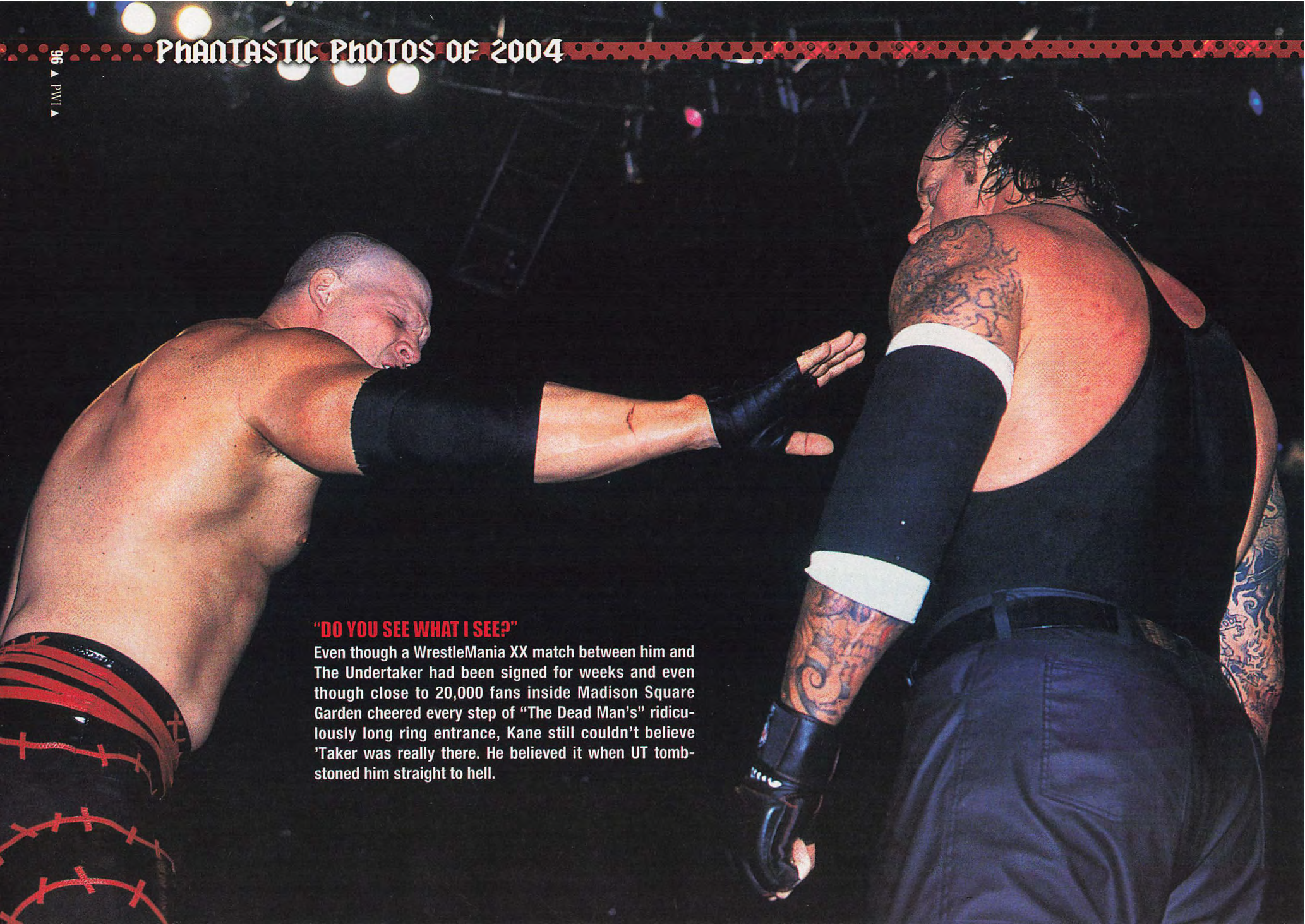


"BUT WE'LL BE FRIENDS ON RAW"

Former ECW star Nova took to a streetfight to the extreme in OVW when he tried to stage a hangin' of Travis Tomko during a wild brawl between his Jersey Crew and Tomko's Disciples of Synn. Fortunately, he wasn't successful. Now Nova is Simon Dean, while Travis Tomko is Tyson Tomko, both with the Raw brand. The fitness-crazed Dean would be wise not to target Tomko with any of his famous insults.

"THIS HAS TO HURT"

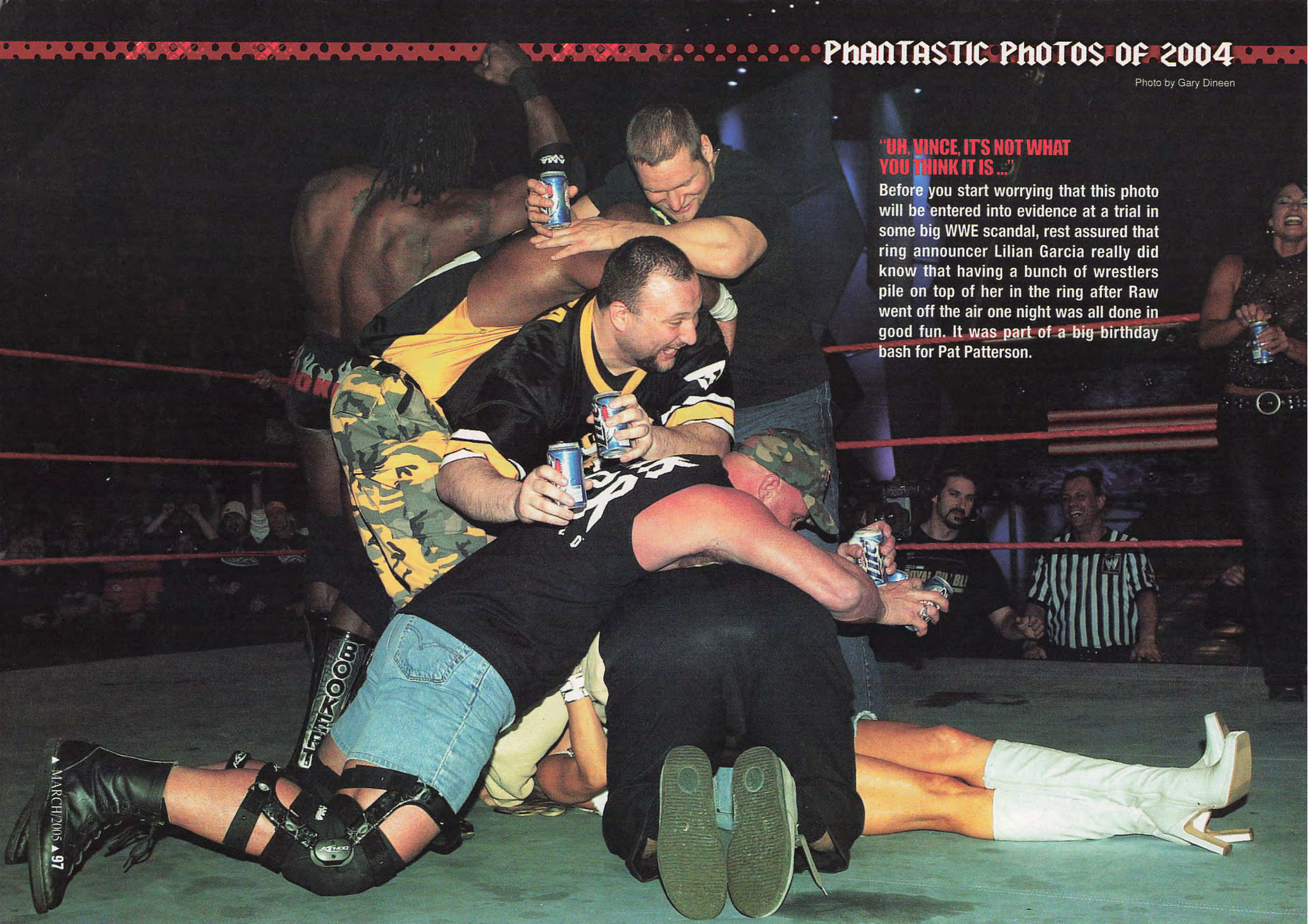
Not many people understood the bizarre preachings of Mordecai during the few months he lasted in WWE before being demoted to OVW, but Paul London and others did understand that he liked to hurt people in any way he could.



"DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?"

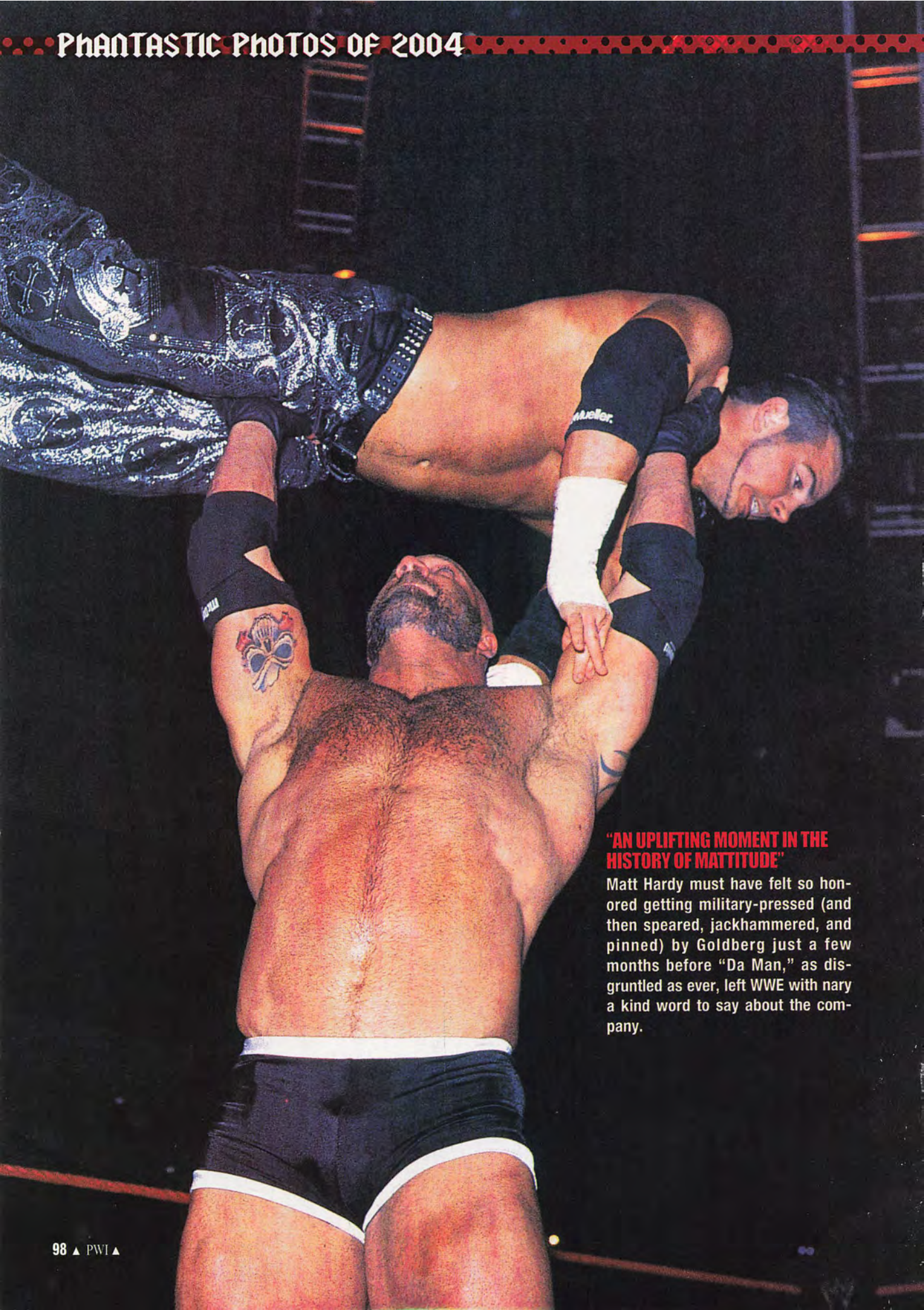
Even though a WrestleMania XX match between him and The Undertaker had been signed for weeks and even though close to 20,000 fans inside Madison Square Garden cheered every step of "The Dead Man's" ridiculously long ring entrance, Kane still couldn't believe 'Taker was really there. He believed it when UT tombstoned him straight to hell.

Photo by Gary Dineen



"UH, VINCE, IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS ..."

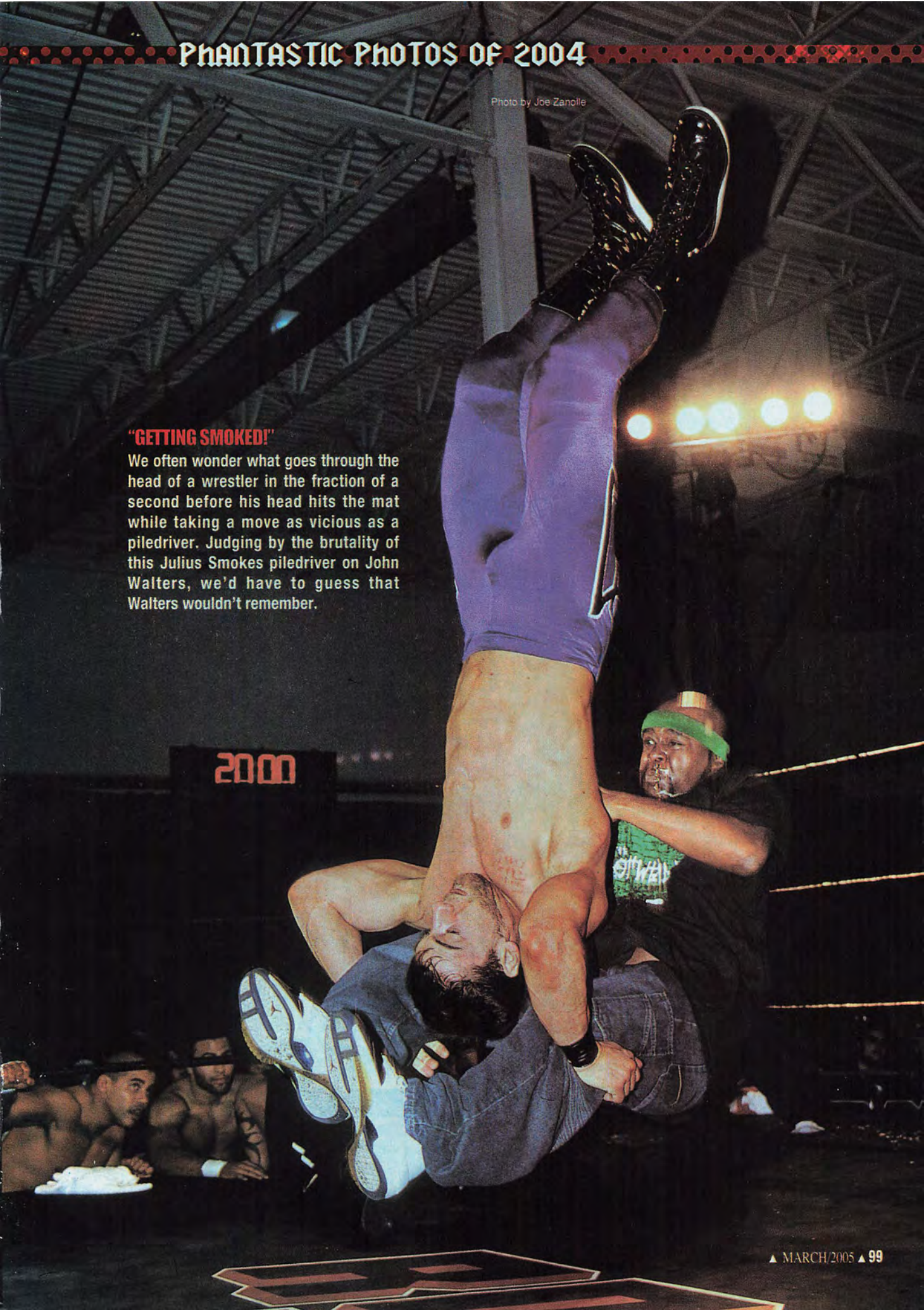
Before you start worrying that this photo will be entered into evidence at a trial in some big WWE scandal, rest assured that ring announcer Lilian Garcia really did know that having a bunch of wrestlers pile on top of her in the ring after Raw went off the air one night was all done in good fun. It was part of a big birthday bash for Pat Patterson.



"AN UPLIFTING MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF MATTITUDE"

Matt Hardy must have felt so honored getting military-pressed (and then speared, jackhammered, and pinned) by Goldberg just a few months before "Da Man," as disgruntled as ever, left WWE with nary a kind word to say about the company.

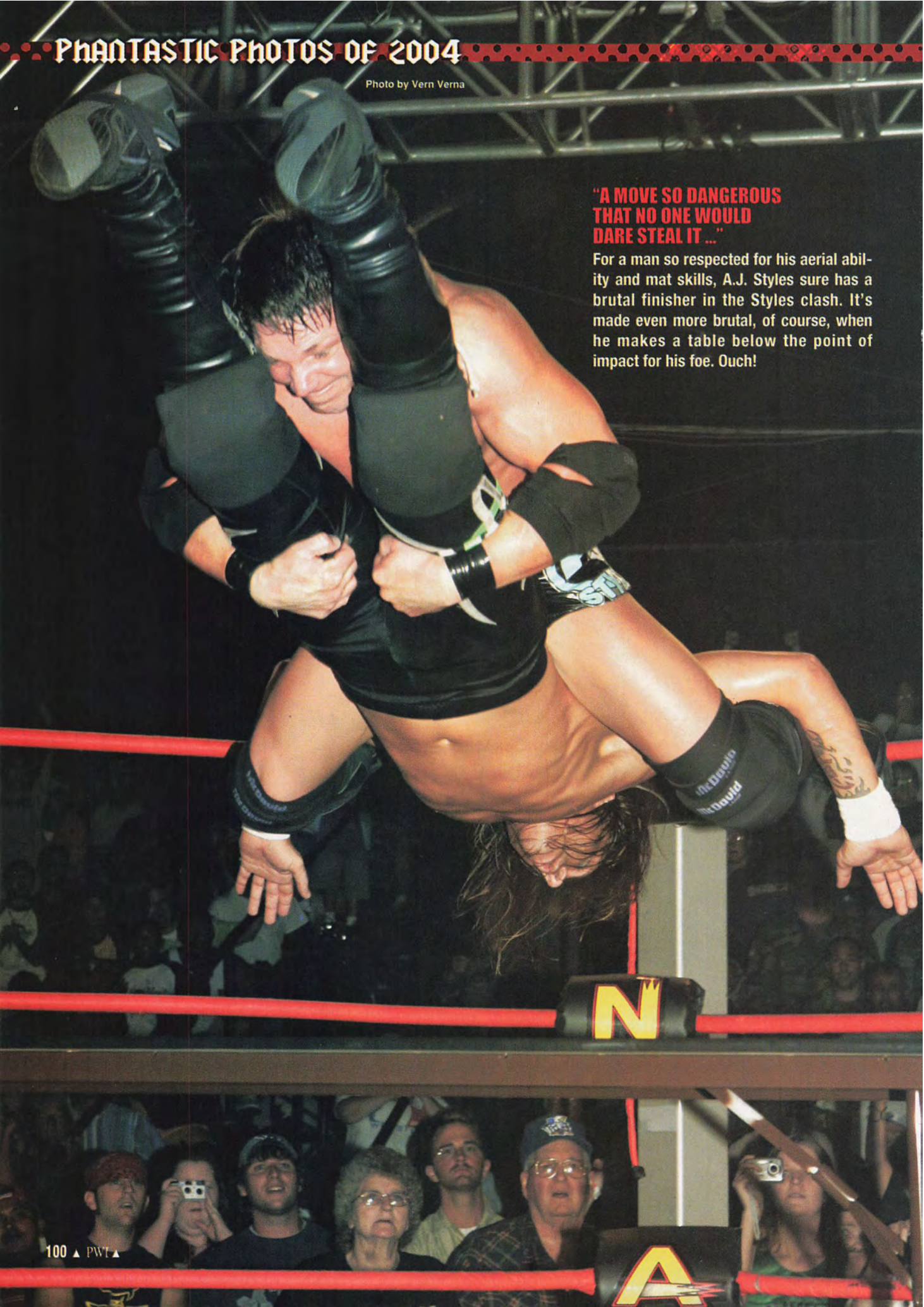
Photo by Joe Zanolle



"GETTING SMOKED!"

We often wonder what goes through the head of a wrestler in the fraction of a second before his head hits the mat while taking a move as vicious as a piledriver. Judging by the brutality of this Julius Smokes piledriver on John Walters, we'd have to guess that Walters wouldn't remember.

Photo by Vern Verna



"A MOVE SO DANGEROUS THAT NO ONE WOULD DARE STEAL IT ..."

For a man so respected for his aerial ability and mat skills, A.J. Styles sure has a brutal finisher in the Styles clash. It's made even more brutal, of course, when he makes a table below the point of impact for his foe. Ouch!

Photo by Joe Zaniolle

"... OR MAYBE ONE GUY MIGHT TRY IT FOR HIMSELF"

Jimmy Rave must be glad A.J. Styles had to give up his Ring of Honor career in order to keep wrestling for TNA. Styles wouldn't give him a warm reception in the ROH locker room after seeing him use what he calls the, um, Rave clash. Even most ROH fans don't appreciate the move theft.

the business page

By Harry Burkett

TNA invades WWE! In a scene reminiscent of DeGeneration X's invasion of a WCW event at the Norfolk Scope in 1998, a group of TNA wrestlers attempted to "welcome" Vince McMahon and several WWE wrestlers who were shooting a commercial at Universal Studios in Orlando on November 10. Ron Killings, B.G. James, Konnan, Shane Douglas, Abyss, and Tracy Brooks tried to greet the superstars with a cake and party balloons.

Of course, 3 Live Kru and their cohorts weren't trying to show hospitality to the WWE folks just because they happened to be only feet away from Universal Studios' Soundstage 21, the home of *Impact* and *Xplosion.* At best, they wanted to get footage of some angry WWE superstars on tape. Or, at least, they wanted to create a buzz in the wrestling media.

"The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes became TNA's new director of authority as the result of a fan vote culminating at Victory Road. He got a more creative position with the company a few weeks later.

In a TNA press release, B.G. James couldn't resist commenting on WWE's elaborate catering spread. "Personally, I just wanted some mahi-mahi," said James, who was involved in the DX invasion with Triple-H, Billy Gunn, X-Pac, and Chyna in 1998. "The only thing I had to eat all day was a stinking cold sandwich from my cheap freelance producer. Now I know how the other half eats."

Moments later, a WWE production assistant was sent to confront the TNA crew and threaten legal action. The following day, WWE sent a stern letter, demanding that TNA officials surrender the footage within seven days and sign an acknowledgement form. As of press time, TNA officials were considering showing the footage at Turning Point.

"Competition is great and makes the wrestling category stronger as a whole, but obviously we are the only ones who feel that way," said Shane Douglas. "We attempted to extend a hand and were disappointed by the treatment we received in our own backyard."

Why does one get the feeling that "The Franchise" was behind this idea all along?

Living "The American Dream" ... Dusty Rhodes has finally landed his dream job (again), that of a booker with a major wrestling company. On November 23, Jerry Jarrett announced that Rhodes would be the promotion's new booker, replacing Jeff Jarrett, who wanted to spend more time with his wife, who is fighting breast cancer.

The three-time former NWA World champion gave a 10-minute talk, discussing his philosophy of wrestling and how his vision for TNA was different from Jeff Jarrett's. He met separately with the X division wrestlers, asking them to slow down the in-ring action and insisting he would try to do more to make them standout *characters* in TNA.

Rhodes will now head the creative team, which also includes Dutch Mantel and Jeremy Borash. Jeff Jarrett, a minority co-owner and the current NWA champion, plans to continue as a main-eventer. Rhodes also served as booker for Jim Crockett Promotions during the heyday of The Four Horsemen and in WCW just before the Monday night war.

Nearly four years after ECW went out of business, it got red-hot again with the release of *The Rise And Fall Of ECW* DVD by WWE. It features a ton of great stuff, including a classic RVD-Jerry Lynn match, and has been a huge hit with fans.

The rise of WWE 24/7 and the fall of ECW ... WWE launched its 24/7 video-on-demand service in November to relatively little fanfare, except a commercial with vintage footage, including Jimmy Snuka's Superfly leap off the top of a cage and Hogan-Andre at WrestleMania III. Obviously, WWE plans to begin the service now and build momentum for it as the months unfold. Negotiations are still underway for Bruno Sammartino and other legends to contribute to the project as commentators and analysts.

WWE's latest DVD—*The Rise And Fall Of ECW*—garnered more attention, however. The two-disc set sold out within two hours of its release at one Barnes & Noble location in New York City, and shot up to number one on amazon.com and deepdiscounts.com, something that even the popular Ric Flair DVD failed to achieve. *The Rise And Fall Of ECW* also ranked number one on several sports DVD bestseller lists in November.

Featuring interviews and commentary from Paul Heyman and several ECW-turned-WWE superstars, the DVD has been praised for its hard-hitting action as well as candid comments about the ECW-WWE relationship over the years. Capitalizing on this success, a DVD featuring Rob Van Dam is scheduled for release on February 2.

The agent who breathes fire ... Rick Steamboat must have caught the wrestling bug again while making several appearances in Ring of Honor in recent months. Why? The former NWA World champion has gained a position as a WWE talent agent. Pat Patterson's retirement and the desire of talent head John Laurinaitis to freshen his staff most likely led to Steamboat's hiring, which was said to be on a trial basis, although most assume it will become full-time. It also helped that most of the other agents—including Arn Anderson, Dean Malenko, Fit Finlay, and Steve Keirn—were active during the same era as Steamboat and no doubt have much respect for "The Dragon."

Ric Flair has often praised Steamboat for providing him with his greatest matches. With these rivals now working for WWE simultaneously, it might be hard for Vince McMahon to resist one last match between the two legends.

Steamboat is leaving the everyday operations of his marine shop in North Carolina to his business partner in order to accept the position. Expect to see WWE superstars using a lot more knife-edge chops and looping armdrags in the near future.

WWE Stockwatch

(For the period of October 16 to November 15, 2004)

30-Day High: 13.25 on November 5
30-Day Low: 11.80 on October 20
52-Week High: 15.44 on April 2 and 22, 2004
52-Week Low: 10.88 on December 4, 2003

It was bound to happen. WWE's financial statement for its second quarter included the bad news that insiders expected for a long time, but had managed to avoid for the past year. The company's second-quarter earnings plunged 74 percent compared to the same period in 2003. Net profit fell from $17.1-million to $4.5-million, also compared to last year. Gross revenue dropped 11 percent, from $94.4-million to $83.9-million. WWE stock took a tumble when this news went public on November 23.

WWE fans, fully aware of the company's poor domestic business, might have been smart enough to sell their stock before the release of this report. Wall Street analysts, who are more accustomed to examining business models and overall trends, aren't as knowledgeable about WWE's current struggles, both creatively and in terms of talent.

Now, Wall Street also knows. During this quarter, there wasn't a WrestleMania extravaganza, corporate restructuring, or enough international revenue to cover the fact that WWE's immediate future looks rather cloudy—unless something breaks and wrestling becomes hot again.

Vince McMahon did receive a consolation prize, though. The Board of Directors voted to double WWE's per-share dividend, meaning he will receive $5.7-million per quarter—on top of his regular salary—no matter how the business fares in the foreseeable future.

TV breakdown

RAW (Spike TV)

October 25: 3.7
November 1: 3.6
November 8: 3.6
November 15: 3.9

Analysis: *Raw* has experienced a nice recovery since mid-summer, with overall ratings in the upper-3s most weeks. The McMahons must be happy that Major League Baseball's postseason is over, too, because *Raw* made a big rebound on October 25, scoring a 3.7, after plummeting to 3.0 the previous week due in part to the fifth game of the American League Championship Series between bitter rivals Boston and New York. There are other signs of an upsurge: The November 8 edition actually gained audience going into the second hour (a bit of a rarity these days), and the November 15 program—the day after Survivor Series—got a post-PPV bounce with an overall rating of 3.9 (a show built entirely around Maven!). Match quality has been only slightly above average, with Ric Flair's victory over Randy Orton on October 25 being the strongest main event of the past few weeks.

SMACKDOWN (UPN)

October 21: 3.2
October 28: 3.4
November 4: 3.4
November 11: 3.5
November 18: 3.5

Analysis: Major League Baseball also cost *Smackdown* some ratings points, with Game 7 of the National League Championship Series knocking *Smackdown's* overall rating down to a 3.2. The good news is that the highest number of the night came from the extended pretaped footage introducing the latest crop of *Tough Enough* contestants. Considering so many viewers stayed tuned to watch a group of unknowns, it could mean they will become engrossed in the overall contest and begin to choose favorites. Booker T becoming a fan favorite seemed to be a hit with the fans, as his feud with WWE Smackdown champion John Bradshaw Layfield gained momentum headed into Survivor Series. *Smackdown* actually beat out ABC's *Life As We Know It* on October 28 and has also done well against Fox and the WB.

VELOCITY (Spike TV)

October 23: 0.6
October 30: 0.6
November 6: 0.6
November 13: 0.5

Analysis: *Velocity* is coasting on fumes these days, with very few original storylines and an overuse of the same undercard wrestlers. Akio has become the Steven Richards of *Velocity*. Josh Matthews' recent in-ring activity on *Smackdown* has allowed him and color commentator Bill DeMott to have some refreshing banter in recent weeks. By the way, DeMott has originated a dangerous new catchphrase: "Bill-ocity." Judging by the ratings, Saturday continues to be a poor night for wrestling.

THE WWE EXPERIENCE (Spike TV)

October 24: 0.6
October 31: 0.4
November 7: 0.3
November 14: 0.5

Analysis: Could it be the Smackdown Your Vote curse? *The WWE Experience* dropped to a frighteningly low 0.3 on November 7, but a sizable number of viewers might have been watching the Sunday morning news shows following the presidential election on November 2. After all, the first debate between President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry affected *Smackdown* similarly on September 30. Fortunately, the show rebounded to score a 0.5 the following week. *Whew,* Ivory, you can breathe now.

SUNDAY NIGHT HEAT (Spike TV)

October 24: 0.7
October 31: 0.7
November 7: 0.8
November 14: 0.8

Analysis: *Sunday Night Heat's* overall rating dropped by an average of one-tenth of a point in the second half of October and first half of November. Todd Grisham and Jonathan Coachman have established a solid rapport, and Steven Richards and Val Venis seem to be the top stars of the show. The November 14 edition immediately preceded Survivor Series, but that didn't boost the overall number at all. Over the past few years, pay-per-views have become less and less relevant to the ratings of WWE television shows.

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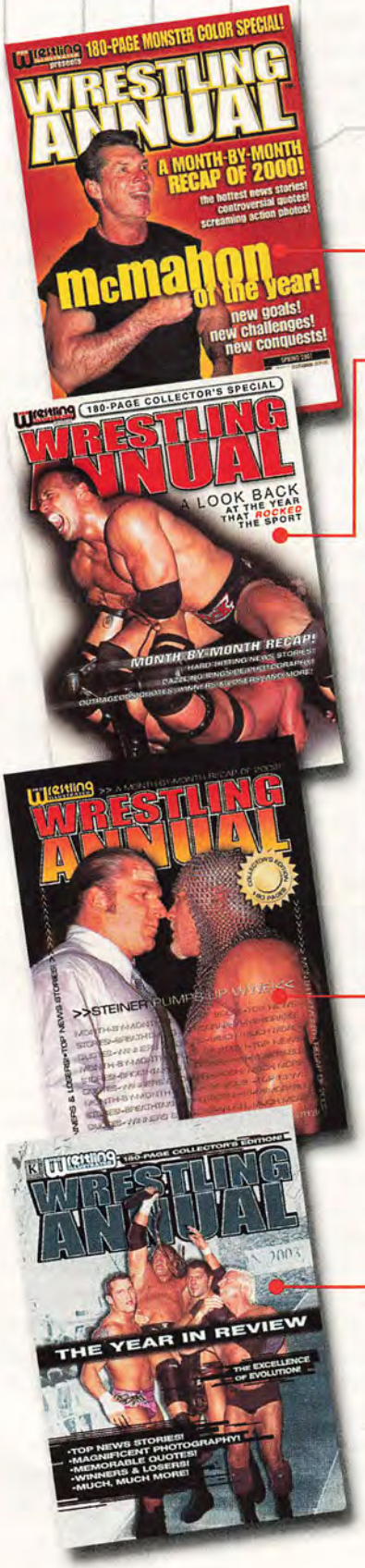

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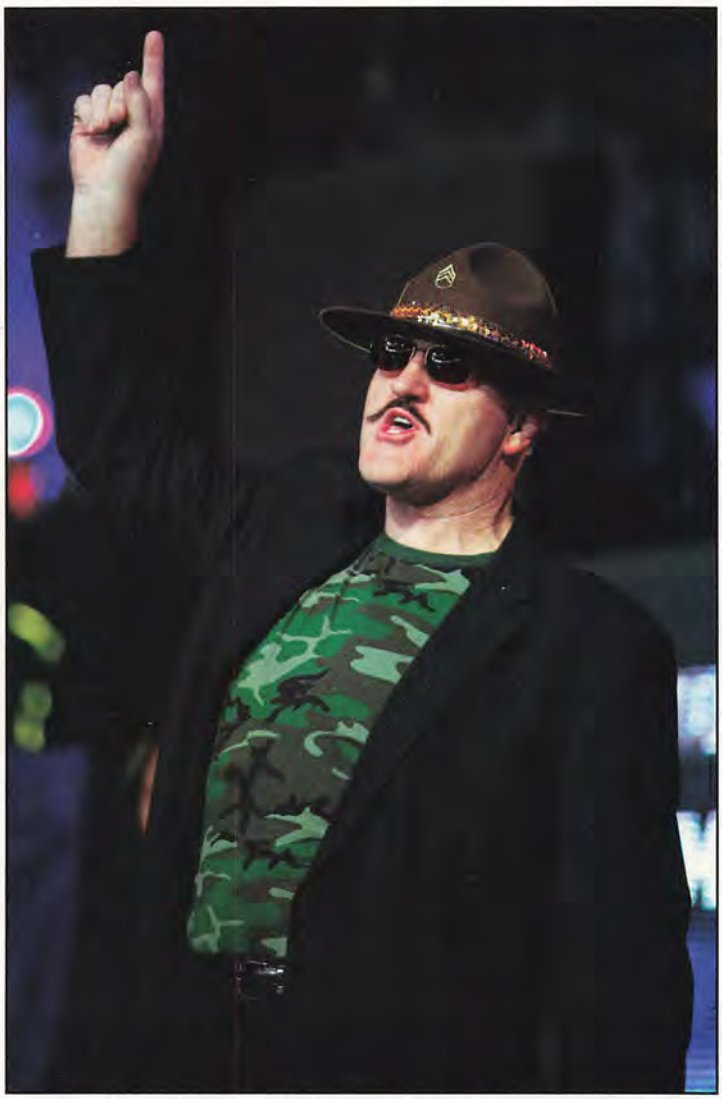
the steel cage

By Jason Langin

THERE ARE TWO words in the professional wrestling vernacular that hardcore fans hate to hear. These two words have helped this industry gain more exposure around the world during the last few decades, but at the same time have plagued it since they were first spoken.



Sgt. Slaughter was one of 10 former stars inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2004, a highlight of the year for Jason Langin because he appreciates the fact that Vince McMahon is serious about recognizing great wrestlers of the past.

These two words are "sports entertainment."

It was Big Daddy Vince who coined the term, and to his credit, he ran with the idea. He was able to build WWE into a global phenomenon, with a few of his superstars becoming some of the world's most recognizable figures.

However, to so many hardcore fans, this was never a good thing.

One thing that couldn't be disputed, though, was that McMahon did what he set out to do. He pushed out the "other" guys. After taking a beating of his own for a few years, he pummeled WCW and bought up what was left of it in 2001, built on some of the best concepts developed by ECW (before it, too, folded in 2001), and has no problem dominating TNA and every other smaller promotion out there today. WWE rules, like it or not.

In 2004, though, Vince and his team recognized something. Something that has never been a pleasant sight to a wrestling promoter, regardless of the era. What they saw was a lot of empty seats in the arenas. What was the problem? What other major player was there for fans to watch? What happened to all those fans?

WWE realized that the hardcore fans were still there. The hardcore fans were *always* there. These fans would watch virtually *anybody* wrestle if it was a good match. The fans that were missing were the sports entertainment fans.

A lot of those people are still gone, and I won't go into all the reasons why, but part of it is that there was no larger-than-life figure for them to get behind. Steve Austin was gone. The Rock (basically) gone. Mick Foley (more or less) gone. Hulk Hogan gone. The superstars that made wrestling "entertainment" during the most recent boom period were nowhere to be found. Fans were left with guys like Chris Benoit, Kurt Angle, Eddie Guerrero, and Rey Misterio Jr. Wrestlers who, quite frankly, are pretty ordinary on the microphone and who won't be getting any movie scripts sent their way anytime soon.

And there it was right in front of WWE's face. What these wrestlers and others like them *did* have was unparalleled ability inside the ring. These guys are the best wrestlers the WWE had seen in years, and Vince and the gang decided to capitalize on it.

Thank goodness.

The year 2004 was a year for wrestling fans—the *real* wrestling fans—to rejoice and say thank you. It was a year that the one-two-three meant more than what happened in the locker room in a lot of cases. It was the year that "sports" came back to "sports entertainment."

Yes, 2004 saw the entrance of Eugene. Yes, 2004 saw Paul Bearer buried in a box of cement

and a moronic diva search wasting valuable *Raw* time. And yes, 2004 saw perhaps the stupidest wrestling storyline of all-time, the one involving Kane and Lita.

But we wrestling fans could look past all of that because of the good stuff we got. At least I could.

So let us remember the best *pure* WWE moments of 2004. The moments upon which guys like Bob Backlund, Bret Hart, and other former great *wrestling* superstars of the past could have looked and nodded in appreciation. The moments that brought wrestling back to the wrestling fans.

The year 2004 was the best of Spike Dudley's career. He got to be the star of the WWE cruiserweight division. Langin was happy to see a lot of stars with a lot of previously overlooked and underappreciated in-ring skills get a chance to shine in WWE.

The Royal Rumble. The WWE year started off right with the 2004 Royal Rumble in Philadelphia. Shawn Michaels and Triple-H thrilled a sellout crowd and hundreds of thousands watching on PPV with their last-man-standing match, a match that had the fans eating out of their hands (okay, at least until it ended in an unsatisfying no-contest). And then Chris Benoit's amazing performance in the Rumble match itself, lasting more than an hour to finally get the victory. It was an exhibition in endurance. I might even go so far as to argue that it was the most exciting Rumble of all-time (yes, even better than 1992).

WrestleMania. WrestleMania XX was advertised as "where it all begins ... again." A vague slogan, but a very telling one too. WrestleMania I introduced the world to the spectacle that was professional wrestling. Yes, we paid to see Mr. T get his hands on Roddy Piper and to see Cyndi Lauper strut around the ring by the side of Wendi Richter. But what we also got to see was Tito Santana, Greg Valentine, and Big John Studd—the wrestlers. WrestleMania XX reintroduced fans to the wrestlers—the *great* wrestlers—in matches that they would remember for years. And out of it all came Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero, world champions for a new era. Both men shined in their moments of glory and defended their titles admirably in the ensuing months.

Remembering the past. In 2004, WWE inducted 10 former greats into its hallowed Hall of Fame. It was an important moment. Today's young fans are not familiar with these former superstars. A lot of them only know Jesse Ventura as an outspoken politician, not a flamboyant muscleman who was one of the best talkers in wrestling history. Superstar Graham is an old bald guy now, not the "man with the power, too sweet to be sour." Sgt. Slaughter is a fat guy in fatigues that comes out of hiding once or twice a year to wave the American flag around, not the angry drill sergeant that put maggots in their place.

But WWE reminded us all of who these men (and others) were in their primes. Yes, wrestling has a past—a rich and storied one—and WWE can be proud of it. Even the release of the WWE classic line of Jakks action figures was a tribute to years gone by. Stars like The Ultimate Warrior, Jake Roberts, and Ted DiBiase mean little to a lot of the new fans of today, but because WWE made toys using their likenesses, it tells us all that these former stars were important.

Return of the battle royal. One of my personal favorites. Fans were treated to a total of five battle royals and one mini-Royal Rumble on *Raw* and *Smackdown* broadcasts in 2004 as of press time. These matches offered us some creative final moments that kept us on the edges of our seats.

Giving guys a chance. While it certainly was the year for Guerrero and Benoit, 2004 gave a chance to other longshots as well. Guys like John Bradshaw Layfield, Paul London, Billy Kidman, Orlando Jordan, and Spike Dudley were all able to make major impacts this year. Good for them. Good for us too.

I don't care what all the experts say—2004 was a great year to be a wrestling fan. I had more fun watching this year than I have had in a long time. What can we look forward to in 2005? More of the same, perhaps? That's what we, the *wrestling fans,* want. □

win, lose, or draw

By Harry Burkett

NO MATTER HOW you look at it, 2004 was not a hot year in pro wrestling. There's a term that industry executives and optimistic wrestling writers like using to describe such years: transitional. While I'm tempted to suggest this was a transitional year, I'm going to risk all credibility with an odd theory. I believe 2004 was the year that Vince McMahon utilized an amazingly disciplined and ingenious strategy.

Vince McMahon has been taking a lot of heat for WWE's creative slump in recent years. Harry Burkett, however, still believes he is a genius. And he thinks we'll see why soon ... probably.

McMahon did not want WWE to be wildly successful in 2004. In fact, he did his best to make sure it was a lukewarm year.

How could this be? I admit to being the same conspiracy theorist who thought McMahon sent Scott Hall, Kevin Nash, and Vince Russo to WCW in order to destroy it. But, looking at the year 2004 objectively, the only logical conclusion I can reach is McMahon and WWE held back, unwilling to cash in their chips just yet.

Before I get to the reason behind my theory, consider this: Why should we assume that McMahon, the same man responsible for WWE's national expansion in the 1980s and the same man responsible for the company's great comeback in the late-1990s, *isn't* capable of such a diabolical scheme? Right now, if you read the Web sites and message boards, you would believe that 17-year-old kids have better ideas than WWE Creative. Wouldn't those 17-year-old kids have done a better job of giving Chris Benoit a credible reign as Raw champion, a better job of selling John Cena to the 18-to-29-year-old demographic, and a better job of making Rob Van Dam a household name?

Yes, any smart 17-year-old kid who avidly follows wrestling would have done a better job. That is, unless these 17-year-old kids are not capable of appreciating Vince McMahon's master plan, which just might turn out to be a spectacular demonstration of brilliance and far-sightedness. He's already placed 6.1 million shares of WWE stock for sale, expected to result in cash assets of $70.67-million for his estate-planning vehicle, the Vincent K. McMahon Irrevocable Trust. Why shouldn't we believe McMahon would take the same degree of care when planning for WWE's creative future?

Okay, I've teased you long enough. If you haven't figured out my theory already, I believe that McMahon spent 2004 laying the groundwork for wrestling's next boom. How? By letting *Raw* and *Smackdown* become formula shows with somewhat flat characters. Granted, the Raw brand has been very solid lately, with WWE carefully grooming Randy Orton and Shelton Benjamin, and Evolution being involved in plenty of plot twists. The recent parody of the controversial *Monday Night Football/Desperate Housewives* skit, featuring Benjamin, McMahon, and Trish Stratus, displayed some of that edgy humor that was apparent in virtually every *Raw* of the late-'90s. That tells me that WWE Creative is still capable of great television, but it is holding back for some reason.

McMahon's master plan has been more apparent with Smackdown, which I respectfully call WWE Dumbdown. Virtually everything about Smackdown has become mind-numbingly formulaic. From Michael Cole and Tazz spoonfeeding storylines to viewers, to The Undertaker being involved in storylines that could have been devised a dozen

years ago, I have to believe this is being done on purpose.

How else can you explain the rise of John Bradshaw Layfield to the Smackdown championship? He's the Yokozuna of his time, keeping the belt warm until the next great star comes along. JBL is a character that could have come straight out of the late-'80s, and all of his feuds have seemed terribly contrived, from his race-baiting of Eddie Guerrero to his eye-popping fear of The Undertaker. And how did you like the recent setup for the four-way involving Layfield, Undertaker, Guerrero, and Booker T at Armageddon? The idea of each man coming out individually, confronting JBL in the ring, and then having General Manager Teddy Long announce the upcoming four-way has been done time and again in WWE.

Chyna, Shawn Michaels, Triple-H and everyone else associated with DeGeneration X broke a lot of rules in ushering in the era of "Attitude" less than a decade ago. Burkett is ready to see some of the new rules broken. But who will do that?

And how else do you explain the stale and trite backstage segments with Rob Van Dam and Rey Misterio Jr.? Anyone who watched ECW in the late-'90s would have cited Van Dam as one of the most innovative and charismatic performers of the era, most notably in the ring, but also with his promos. These days, Van Dam is most exciting when Smackdown cameras focus on him stretching or lacing his boots. Sure, Vince, I suppose we're supposed to believe these are your best ideas.

Then there are Carlito Caribbean Cool, Rene Dupree, and Kenzo Suzuki, all of whom are about as one-dimensional as Savio Vega, The Mountie, and Hakushi, long-forgotten names from the early-'90s. Wouldn't a feud between Bret Hart and Kwang seem a perfect fit for Smackdown right about now?

Undoubtedly, this is part of the Mc-Masterplan. To duplicate the late-'90s boom, McMahon spent 2004 trying to recreate the doldrums of the early-'90s. And why not? WWE remained fiscally solid while so many other media and entertainment companies were losing money during the recent recession. The company has substantial cash assets, *Raw* and *Smackdown* are still doing respectable ratings, and the pay-per-views—although the buy rates aren't spectacular—are still turning a profit. Why should McMahon go all out to produce revolutionary television shows if most consumers don't have the discretionary income to spend on entertainment during a still-recovering economy?

McMahon could be waiting for the economy to improve and for the reality TV fad to take its course. Maybe he's waiting for TNA to become more of a force so he can play off that rivalry. Then, when the general public is ready for wrestling again, he will unleash a Creative fury that will take everyone by surprise. For the past three years, WWE has been following established formulas in every aspect of its business. Creatively, there are clear good guys and bad guys, and slow buildups toward pay-per-views. Production-wise, *Raw* and *Smackdown* are the same shows they were in 2000, with the same formulas for matches, in-ring promos, and backstage vignettes. Even wrestlers' entrance themes are stunningly generic.

The "Attitude" era was so successful because it broke all the rules. In order to break all the rules again, WWE must first establish what the rules are. That's why McMahon has been so disciplined regarding the brand extension. Aside from the mid-card draft early in 2004, McMahon has resisted the temptation to hotshot Raw or Smackdown with invasions or crossover talent. He wants fans to become accustomed to the formula. Then, when the time is right, all hell is going to break loose in WWE again.

I'm confident that McMahon is this kind of genius. So, *um,* Vince, you can prove me right anytime now. □

the straight shooter

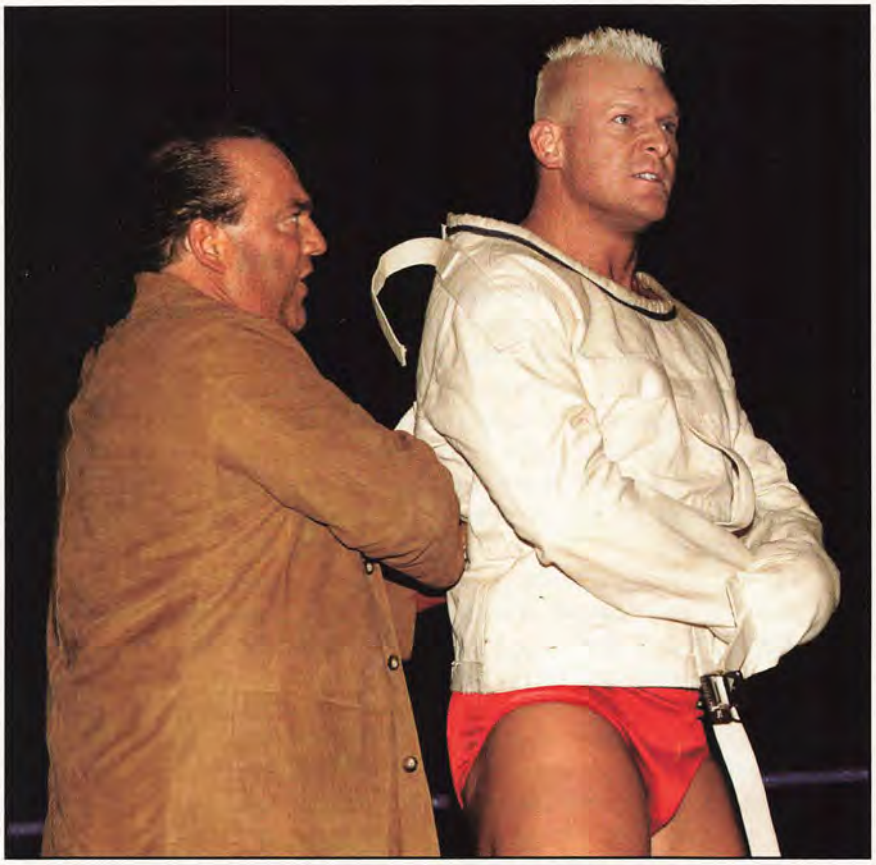
By Dan Murphy

ON PAGES 144 and 145 of this magazine, all of us on the *PWI* staff reveal our lasting memories of the year that has passed. I'd like to ask you—Joe Wrestling Fan—to think back on 2004 and reflect on the image you feel sums up the year in wrestling.

Is it a tearful Chris Benoit standing proudly amidst the swirling confetti and holding aloft his coveted Raw championship belt at the close of WrestleMania XX? Is it Eddie Guerrero holding the Smackdown title belt in one hand and Kurt Angle's boot in the other, laughing in Angle's face earlier that same night?

Or is it The Undertaker drowning a squealing Paul Bearer in a vat of wet cement? If so, then this is the column for you.

The year-end edition of "The Straight Shooter" is where we look back on the best of the worst, the most ridiculous storylines and outrageous happenings of the past 12 months. Let's get to this year's top 10.



Heidenreich can be kept in a straightjacket 24/7, according to Dan Murphy, if that will keep him from any more bizarre, *um,* interaction with Smackdown's top blow-by-blow man, Michael Cole.

10. Kamala ticklers

The finest moment of the tedious WWE diva search came when the silicone-enhanced beautiful people were introduced to "The Ugandan Giant." These chicks thought WWE would be their shortcut to fame, fortune, and endorsements. Instead, they found themselves elbow-deep in the Kamala's painted belly folds in their attempts to seduce him. The Ugandan has never been happier.

9. How *you* can help bail out New Jack

New Jack got just a tad too extreme for Jacksonville, Florida, police in October when he was arrested and charged with stabbing wrestler William Jason Lane 14 times during a hardcore match. While an arrest stemming from violence during a pro wrestling match is weird enough, New Jack then raised the weirdness bar with his official Web site. When he was unable to post bond, he began an Internet campaign to help him raise bail money. Fans could bid on official New Jack merchandise, make donations, or pay to get a personalized phone call from the "Original Gangsta." And we thought the authorities only let you make one phone call from jail! The charges were dropped a short time later.

8. Luger heads home

Putting the boots to "The Total Package" never gets old. In October, TNA taped a special to air on Fox Sports Net's *Best Damn Sports Show Period,* and Luger was invited to make an appearance. According to several reports, Luger made no effort to endear himself to the TNA crew and spent most of his time sitting on a golf cart backstage. Jerry Jarrett reportedly was so angry about Luger's diva-like behavior that he sent him home and told him never to come back to TNA (though Jeff Jarrett did bring Luger back for a brief interview with *TBDSSP).*

7. The joy of six

I suppose we won't know for sure if TNA's decision to replace the standard square ring with a six-sided ring was a good idea or a bad idea for a while yet. But what we do know is that TNA hyped the six-

sided ring as a huge advantage to X division high-flyers and promised matches would be more innovative and exciting than ever. It still hasn't happened. In fact, the dominant X champ since the six-sided ring was introduced has been Petey Williams, a ground-based grappler. Most of the time, wrestlers just look confused as they try to locate the corners and get their bearings.

6. The death of cruiserweight wrestling

At a time when WWE had Billy Kidman, Paul London, Rey Misterio Jr., Shannon Moore, Ultimo Dragon, Nunzio, Jamie Noble, and Chavo Guerrero Jr. under contract, the cruiserweight title was held by Jacquelyn, followed shortly thereafter by the 55-year-old Chavo Guerrero Sr. That pretty much sums up the promotion's vision for the once-prestigious cruiserweight title: comedy prop. What does it say about your title when Chavo Classic—whose best years are two *decades* behind him—opted to skip dates rather than humiliate himself with ridiculous storylines? And he was the champion!

5. Dusty Rhodes = rock star

In hyping Jeff Hardy's signing with TNA, Rhodes said he and Hardy had to stick together because "there's only a few of us with that rock star status." Dusty a rock star? He makes Fat Elvis look like Scott Weiland.

4. Heidenreich and Michael Cole re-enact a love scene from *Oz*

That's *Oz* as in the HBO series. Big, bad John kidnapped Cole from the broadcast position on *Smackdown,* then had him squealing like a piggy in a backstage closet. WWE officials tried to assure us the incident wasn't supposed to resemble the "prison love" act it appeared to be, but we all know what we saw. It's scorched onto our corneas.

3. The concrete crypt handicap match

My good friend Brandon Thurston raised a good question during The Undertaker's bout against The Dudley Boyz at The Great American Bash. If 'Taker can summon lightning bolts at will (as he did prior to the match), why not just zap both Dudleys and call it a night? After winning the match and saving Paul Bearer from being immersed in wet cement (how does New Jack get arrested and not the Dudleys?!), 'Taker went ahead and had Bearer buried himself. The start of a heel turn for "The Dead Man"? Nope. Just a storyline that vanished overnight. R.I.P. Paul.

The Gene Snitsky-Kane feud—also involving Lita and Matt Hardy in major roles—won't go down as one of The Murph's all-time favorites. In fact, just when he didn't think it could get much worse, it did!

2. Hall of Fame at last (well, sort of)

When WWE decided to honor some of its legends with a Hall of Fame induction ceremony during WrestleMania weekend, I thought it was a marvelous idea. But it wasn't Bruno Sammartino, Hulk Hogan, or Bret Hart getting inducted. Apparently, they're all behind Pete Rose on the induction list. Rose's awkward presence tarnished the entire event and turned what could have been a nostalgic and emotional tribute into an unfunny comedy skit.

1. "I'll kill you like I killed your baby!"

Maybe Kane should become the unofficial mascot of ridiculous storylines. Anyone remember Katie Vick? The Kane/Matt Hardy/Lita/Gene Snitsky debacle included such awful elements as coerced sex/rape, a shotgun wedding, and miscarriage. Worst of all, it resulted in numerous Snitsky promos. And how does a rapist suddenly become a fan favorite when his estranged wife suffers a miscarriage? Ask WWE Creative. □

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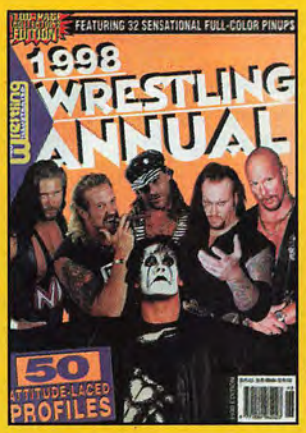

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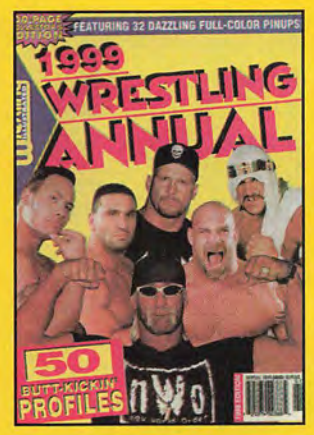

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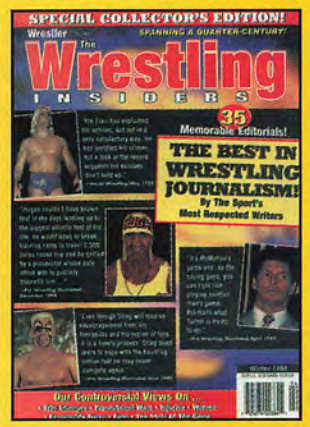

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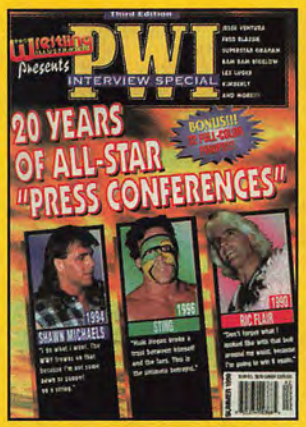

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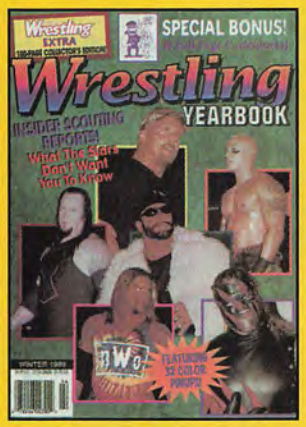

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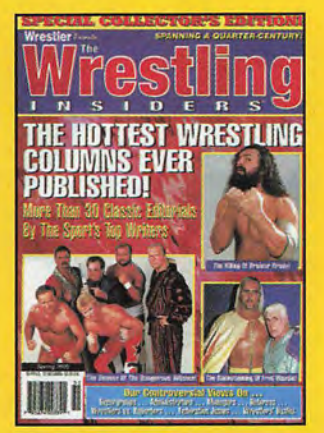

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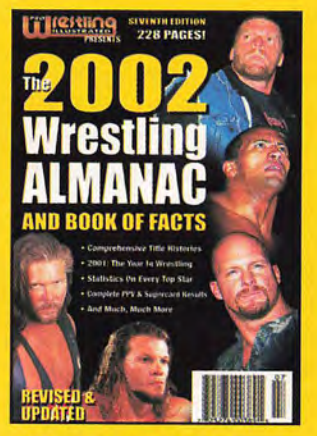

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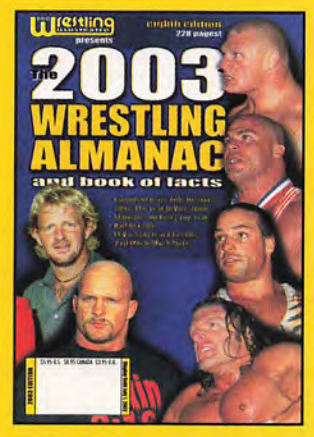

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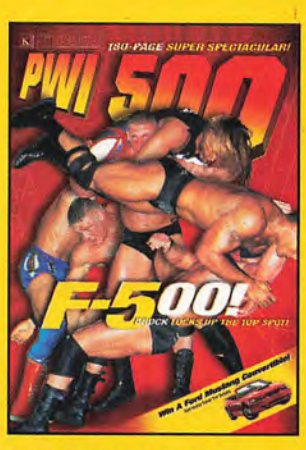

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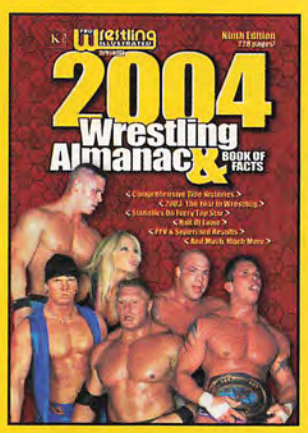

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You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just *have* to know about this person. Well, these are the 12 questions you'd never think of asking

12 questions

KENNY "THE KING" BOLIN

Other than you, who is the greatest king in wrestling history: Harley Race, Jerry Lawler, Haku, Ernie Ladd, or Rufus R. Jones?

Jerry Lawler. He was the king I stole the crown from. I knew I couldn't compete with him as a wrestler, so I surpassed him as a manager. My only competition as a manager would come from Jim Cornette, and he's not much competition at all.

Who is your favorite historical king?

Henry VIII. Isn't he the one who had his ex-wives' heads chopped off? Him. He ran a tight ship. I admire that.

Exactly what's inside that briefcase that you carry around with you in OVW all the time?

None of your damn business. How's that for an answer?

Who was the last wrestler you saw who you just knew was going to become a superstar?

John Cena. Of course, that was mostly because I managed him. I guess he also had a little bit of God-given talent, but it was mostly because I taught him everything he needed to know.

What's the best insult you've ever taken from a fan?

Man, I'll need a second on that one. I try not to let the fans get one over on me. Let's see. One night I was wearing a blue suit and the fans were calling me "the blue whale." Then one guy yelled out, "Unbutton your shirt and let me see your blowhole." That caught me off-guard for a second. That was good.

Let's turn it around now. What's your favorite insult for the fans?

"The last time I saw a head like yours it was on an iodine bottle." You know, the skull and crossbones. No one ever gets it. It's funny to watch them sit there and try to figure it out.

You have a choice between Ru Paul, Martha Stewart, and Jim Hellwig to live with on a deserted island for the rest of your life. Which would you choose and why?

I can't think of any better company than myself. It sure beats all of those folks.

If you could say anything to Vince McMahon right now, what would it be?

Merge OVW with WWE. And hire Kenny Bolin. But between you and me, I doubt he could afford me.

Can you walk us through the typical Kenny Bolin workout routine.

It's a lengthy process. All of the rooms of my house have multiple TVs so I can keep track of all the news that affects me. I start my workout in the bedroom by monitoring the three TVs there, then I walk to the bathroom, where I check the Internet, my satellite TV and DVDs, and the B.S. hotline. Then I have to walk to the living room, where there are six TVs to check, followed by the TV in the kitchen and the four in the fireplace den. Then it's down to the Bolin basement for ESPN. I'd say the workout consists of about 15 to 20 hours of strenuous TV watching all over the house. I added a mini-fridge to the basement so I can replenish between sets. Look at me. Do I need to lose weight?

If you were to walk out to the parking lot tonight and find your car wouldn't start, who in the locker room would you turn to fix it?

No one here knows more about cars than I do. I would call the fine people at Paul Miller Ford, where I happen to be a company spokesman. No one cares for you like Paul Miller Ford. Want me to spell that for you?

The NHL lockout: Who's to blame, players or owners?

What's the NHL? The National Hooker League? Hopefully, it's not the owners.

You have a hammer, a midget, and a roulette wheel. What are your plans for the evening?

I'd strap the midget to the wheel and give it a spin. Then I'd take one whack at the wheel with the hammer. With any luck, I'd be able to nail him in the skull. If I hit the wheel, it's the midget's lucky day. □

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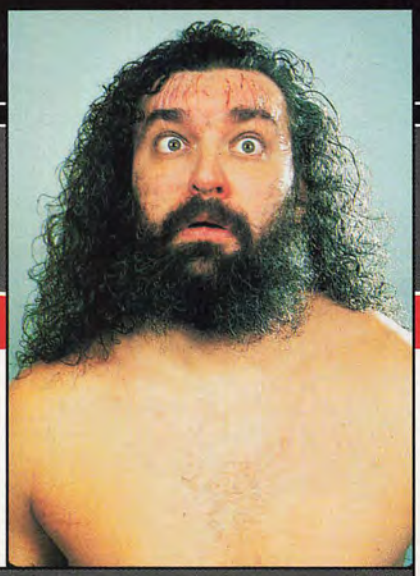


The Wrestling Observer

Hall of Fame

In each issue, *PWI* will honor one member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame, which we recognize as the sport's official Hall of Fame

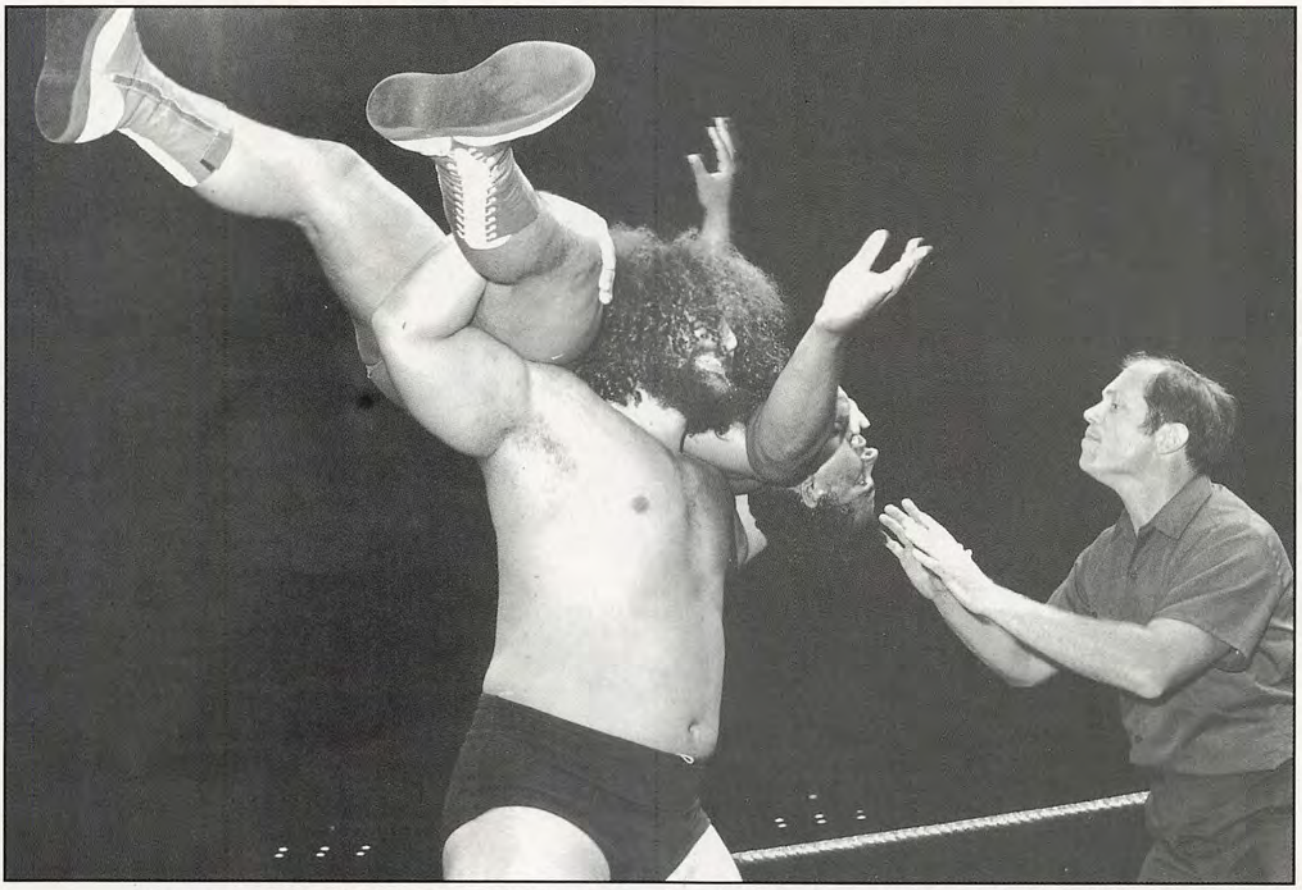
Bruiser Brody

LOOKING BACK ON the 1980s, it's easy to say Hulk Hogan and Ric Flair were the dominant wrestlers of the decade.

But there was another wrestler who was feared on both sides of the Pacific, a wild-haired warrior widely considered to be the best brawler in the sport and one of the most influential figures in wrestling history. That man was Bruiser Brody.

Brody was never a company man. He took pride in being an individual—and a nightmare for promoters. When Brody came into a territory, he arrived on his own terms and left when it suited him. He wrestled to put food on the table for his family and cared little for title belts, unless they earned him more money.

Tragically, Brody's career was cut short on July 17, 1988, when he was stabbed to death in the dressing room prior to a WWC card in Puerto Rico. Brody was so respected by his peers that when the wrestler ac-



Here's an eerie Brody picture for you: That's Jose Gonzales he's dominating in a 1976 match in New York. Gonzales was charged with his 1988 murder but ultimately acquitted.

Brody didn't have Ivan Putski's bodybuilder physique, but he was as tough as any wrestler who ever competed. And he was plenty strong enough to wear down Putski.

cused of murdering him—Jose Gonzales—was acquitted, dozens of wrestlers vowed to never compete in Puerto Rico as a protest.

Brody started his career in 1973 at the relatively late age of 27, competing under his given name, Frank Goodish. At 6'8", 325, Brody thrived against wrestling's super heavyweights. His rugged, brawling style, incredible ability to absorb punishment, and mercenary persona endeared him to Stan Hansen, and together they had a lot of success as a team. As a singles wrestler, Brody won the coveted Florida championship before joining the WWWF in 1976. Vince McMahon Sr. gave Goodish the name Bruiser Brody, and he dove into a feud with Bruno Sammartino over the World title.

Following his stint in the WWWF, Brody stormed Texas, where he traded the NWA American heavyweight title with Fritz Von Erich in 1977. He went on to win the Texas tag team title twice (with Gino Hernandez and Mike York).

In January 1979, Brody made a huge impact in his Japanese debut, teaming with King Curtis Iaukea to beat the legendary All-Japan tandem of Giant Baba and The Destroyer. With his unkempt hair and stiff style, he was an immediate sensation in Japan, where he's still considered one of the top *gaijin* (foreign) wrestlers to ever compete in that nation.

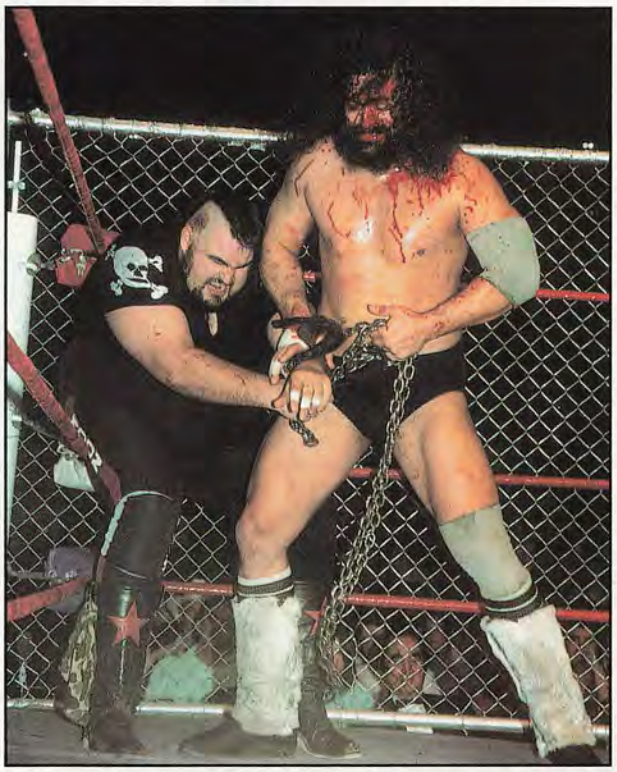
In 1981, Brody returned to Texas-based World Class as a fan favorite, teaming with Kerry Von Erich to win the American tag title from Hernandez and Gary Young. Still, Brody kept his options open and continued traveling, working wherever the money was. In October 1981, Brody beat Dory Funk Jr. in Tokyo to win the NWA international title. In December of that year, he teamed with Jimmy Snuka to win the prestigious All-Japan Real World Tag League Tournament.

In April 1982, Brody regained the NWA international title with another win over Funk in Japan, further building his reputation in the Orient. In December 1983, Brody and Hansen reformed their team to win the AJPW Real World tag tourney. Four months later, Brody and Hansen won Japan's PWF tag title.

Though he was heavily recruited by both the WWF and the NWA, Brody remained independent. In 1986, he made another successful tour of World Class, where he defeated Terry Gordy in a barbed-wire match. In May, Brody beat Rick Rude by disqualification to win the World Class TV title. That year, Brody was voted Wrestler of the Year by readers of the *Wrestling Observer*, although, perhaps because of his reluctance to sign a deal with a promotion with national TV exposure, he did not even capture a runner-up spot in *PWI's* Achievement Awards. He was, however, posthumously given the Editors' Award by *PWI* in 1988.

Brody found a second wrestling home in Japan, where he won some titles and broke some bones. It's a chair to the gut of All-Japan founder and superstar Giant Baba.

The style of wrestling that Brody relished was part of the inspiration for the hardcore style that dominated the 1990s. Brody's refusal to toe any company line remains legendary. He was a first ballot inductee into the *Observer* Hall of Fame in 1996. □



Even with just his fists at his disposal, Brody was dangerous. Put him inside a steel cage and give him a steel chain and he became lethal. Pity One Man Gang here.

arena reports

We encourage promoters and fans to send results to:
"Arena Reports," c/o Pro Wrestling Illustrated, Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Fax results to **(215) 540-0146.**
E-mail results to **PWIQueen@aol.com.**

Spotlight Card of the Month

ELIZABETH, NJ—Ring of Honor at the Rex Plex: **Chad Collyer** wrestled **Nigel McGuinness** to a 15-minute draw ... **The Carnage Crew** beat **Davey Andrews** & **Franco** ... **Izzy** defeated **Trent Acid**, **Fast Eddie**, and **Jack Evans** in a four-way scramble ... **Jimmy Rave** pinned **Jay Lethal** ... **C.M. Punk** & **Ace Steel** defeated **Austin Aries** & **Roderick Strong** ... **Dunn** & **Marcos** defeated **Angeldust** & **Dixie** ... Pure wrestling champion **John Walters** defeated **Homicide** by disqualification ... Tag team champions **Ricky Reyes** & **Rocky Romero** beat **Dan Maff** & **B.J. Whitmer** ... **Jushin Liger** & **Samoa Joe** defeated **Bryan Danielson** & **Low-Ki**.
(11-06-04)

—"Spotlight" photos by Joe Zanolle

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA

MOBILE—South Bayou Wrestling at the Rec Center: **Surge** & **Tim Vaughn** beat **Heath Trenchcoat** & **J.P. Brutal** ... **The Great Hurtado** beat **Alvin Riggs** ... **Agent Orange** & **Hugo Rouge** beat **Dan Mills** & **Mike Reed** ... **Joseph** beat **James Grath** ... **Youth of Today** beat **The New Outlaws**.
(11-15-04)

—Jason Rand

CALIFORNIA

LOS ANGELES—Pro Wrestling Guerrilla at the Hollywood JCC: **Disco Machine** & **Excalibur** beat **Los Rojo Locos** ... **Puma** beat **Tony Stradlin** ... **Ricky Reyes** & **Rocky Romero** beat **Hook Bomberry** & **Apollo Kahn** ... **Super Dragon** beat heavyweight champ **Frankie Kazarian** to win the title ... **Christopher Daniels** beat **Jack Evans** ... **El Generico** beat **Kevin Steen** ... **"American Dragon" Bryan Danielson** beat **Scott Lost**.
(11-13-04)

—Lola Marquez

DELAWARE

NEWARK—East Coast Wrestling Association at the Greater Newark Boys' & Girls' Club: **Johnny Maxx** defeated **Mr. Ooh La La** in a hair vs. hair match ... **Mega** defeated **Prince Nana** in a loser-leaves-the-ECWA-for-90 days match ... **Ace Darling** & **The O.C. Boyz** defeated **Carlton P. Hightower** & **The Chick Magnets** ... **Arch Kincaid** & **Austin Aries** defeated **John Walters** & **Andrew Ryker** ... **Striker** defeated **Mike Kruel** ... **Scotty Charisma**, **Striker**, & **Suba** defeated **Ruffhouse Rivera** & **The Canadian Superstars** ... **Low-Ki** defeated **Mike Fury** ... Tag team champions **Billy Bax** & **Rob Eckos** defeated **The Japanese Pool Boy** & **Chase DelMonte** ... **Nick Malakai** defeated Mid-Atlantic champion **Fred Sampson** to win the title.
(11-13-04)

—Aden Matthews

FLORIDA

DeBARY—Southern Championship Wrestling at the VFW: **Mister Saint Laurent** beat **Flatline** ... **David Mercury** defeated **Aaron Epic** ... **Leon Scott** beat **Eddie Torres** ... **Sequel** defeated **Scott Davis** ... **Heartbreak Xpress** beat **Johnny Schumacher** & **Dagon Briggs** ... **Chasyn Rance** beat **Josh Rich** ... **Manny Montana** & **Jason Hexx** beat **Ryze** & **Vordell Walker**.
(11-13-04)

—Donna Morganti

MIAMI—WWE at the American Airlines Arena: Cruiserweight champion **Spike Dudley** beat **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** and **Billy Kidman** in a three-way match ... Smackdown tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Kenzo Suzuki** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... U.S. champion **Carlito Caribbean Cool** defeated **Hardcore Holly** ... **The Big Show** & **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Kurt Angle** & **Luther Reigns** ... **Jackie Gayda** pinned **Dawn Marie** (**Funaki** was the guest referee) ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Heidenreich** ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** pinned **Rey Misterio Jr.**
(11-06-04)

—Duane Long

GEORGIA

CORNELIA—NWA Wildside at the NWA Arena: **Jeremy V** & **Slim J** beat **Pomp** & **Circumstance** ... **Masada** beat **Hayden Young** ... **Mikal Adryan** won a three-way match against **Randall Johnson** and **Anthony Henry** ... **Biohazard** beat **J.C. North** by disqualification ... **Todd Sexton** beat **Gabriel** by submission ... **Brandon P** & **Brett Anthony** beat **Jeff Lewis** & **Jason Blackman** ... **Sal Rinauro** & **Seth Delay**

Nigel McGuinness and Chad Collyer probably got familiar with each other in the Heartland Wrestling Association. Maybe that's why neither ever enjoyed a decisive edge in this match, which ended in a time-limit draw.

John Walters used the ropes to force a break at this instant during a defense of his ROH pure wrestling title and ultimately escaped with a win by DQ over Homicide in a very hard-hitting match.

beat **Iron Saints** ... **Adam Roberts** beat **Skeeter Frost** ... **Nick Halen** & **Jay Fury** beat **The Texas Treats** ... **Ray Gordy** defeated **Onyx**.
(11-05-04)

—Larry Goodman

ILLINOIS

CHAMPAIGN—WWE at Assembly Hall: **Maven** defeated **Rodney Mack** ... **Simon Dean** pinned **Rosey** ... **Tajiri** pinned **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Gene Snitsky** pinned **The Hurricane** ... **William Regal** & **Eugene** defeated **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Jazz** won a seven-woman Halloween battle royal, last eliminating **Stacy Keibler** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Christian** ... **Chris Benoit** & **Randy Orton** beat **Ric Flair** & **Batista**.
(10-31-04)

—Anthony Marzano

INDIANA

DANVILLE—Ringside Wrestling Federation TV taping at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds: Cruiserweight champion **Shawn Cook** pinned **Tiny Tim** ... **Apollo Starr** & **Drew Johnson** defeated **Tommy Gage** & **Matt Valor** ... **Guy Lombardo** and **Itch Coma Weider** battled to a double-disqualification ... **T.J. Powers** pinned **The Bouncer** ... **Brad Lamen** defeated **Ryan Thunder** ... **Tiny Tim** pinned cruiserweight champ **Shawn Cook** to win the title ... **Johnnie Walker** pinned **Brian Roberts** ... **Jim Duggan** defeated **Austin James** by disqualification ... **Billy Roc** pinned **Tommy Gage** ... **Big Daddy** defeated **Johnny Spark** ... **Shawn Cook** defeated **Brad Lamen** ... **Jim Duggan** & **Marty Graw** defeated **T.J. Powers** & **Austin James**.
(11-14-04)

—Randy Klemme

IOWA

CEDAR RAPIDS—WWE at the U.S. Cellular Center: **Stacy Keibler** & **Victoria** beat **Trish Stratus** & **Molly Holly** ... **Gene Snitsky** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Rhyno** & **Tajiri** beat **Rodney Mack** & **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Simon Dean** pinned **Maven** ... **William Regal** & **Eugene** defeated **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** and **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** in a three-way elimination match ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Christian** ... **Chris Benoit**, **Chris Jericho**, & **Randy Orton** beat **Triple-H**, **Ric Flair**, & **Batista**.
(10-24-04)

—Scott Sommers

KANSAS

TONGANOXIE—NWA Kansas at the Junior High School: **Gage Octane** pinned **Stiff Jackson** ... **Mike Kamaka** defeated **Jake Boulder** ... **The Longhorn Outlaw** defeated **Jim Fallon** ... **Jim Fallon** & **Gage Octane** defeated **Stiff Jackson** & **The Longhorn Outlaw** ... **Sarah Morgan** defeated **Takeon the Korean Warrior** ... **The Longhorn Outlaws** defeated **The Knox Brothers** ... **Craig Keesman** defeated **Babyface Nelson** ... Heavyweight champion **Griz** defeated **Shenanigans**.
(11-06-04)

—Joe Powell

KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE—WWE at Broadbent Arena: Smackdown tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Kenzo Suzuki** defeated **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** and **Charlie Haas** & **Rico** in a three-way match ... **Rico** defeated **Rene Dupree** ... **Heidenreich** beat **Johnny Stamboli** ... **The Basham Brothers** beat **Matt Morgan** & **Chris Masters** ... U.S. champion **Carlito Caribbean Cool** beat **Hardcore Holly** ... **The Big Show**, **Eddie Guerrero**, & **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Kurt Angle**, **Mark Jindrak**, & **Luther Reigns** ... Cruiserweight champion **Spike Dudley** beat **Funaki**, **Billy Kidman**, and **Nunzio** in a four-way match ... **Jackie Gayda** pinned **Dawn Marie** ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** defeated **Booker T**.
(10-31-04)

—Frank Miller

MASSACHUSETTS

LOWELL—Chaotic Wrestling at the Polish-American Veterans Club: **Craig Stratton** defeated **The Mighty Mini** ... **Tony Omega** pinned **Arch Kincaid** to win the vacant New England championship ... **Bryan** & **Bill Logan** defeated **George Caesar** & **Roman** ... **Fred Sampson** defeated **Brian Buffet** by disqualification ... **Luis Ortiz** defeated **Chase Del Monte** ... **Brian Buffet** pinned New England champ **Tony Omega** to win the title ... Tag team champions **Pretty Psycho** defeated **The Valedictorians** ... Heavyweight champion **Maverick Wild** defeated **Andre Lyonz**.
(10-29-04)

—Rich Palladino

MICHIGAN

BAY CITY—Ultimate Championship Wrestling at the Community Center: **Sky Devian** won a nine-man cruiserweight challenge against **Unrated**, **Kid Statik**, **Tommy Titus**, **Ash**, **Hornet**, **Nick Xero**, **Anton Arakas**, and **Frank Stein** ... Tag team champions **Mayhem** beat **Rodney Pendrod** & **Xavier Justice** ... **Dave Duponte** wrestled **Bull Wheeler** to a double-disqualification ... **Sebastian Rose** beat **Tommy Titus** ... **The Milwaukee Mauler** beat **Doink the Clown** in a "funhouse rules, loser-leaves-UCW" match ... **Justin Rhodes** beat **Pierce Masters** ... **P.J. Flowers** & **Anton Arakas** beat **Ash** & **Hornet** ... Cruiserweight champion **Jayson Yang** beat **Sky Devian** ... **Pierce Masters** & **Daniel Sigma** beat **Chuck Wagon** & **Kurt Kaos** ... **Bull Wheeler**, **Pete Christie**, **El Diablo**, & **Rick Steiner** beat **Dave Duponte**, **Ricco Rodriguez**, & **Mayhem** in an elimination match.
(11-06-04)

—Liza Albrecht

MINNESOTA

MAPLE GROVE—Midwest Pro Wrestling at the MPW Arena: **Nate Bash** defeated **Tommy Saturday** ... **The Prophet** defeated **Sheriff Johnny Emerald** ... **Lisa** defeated **AnnThraxx** ... **Darin Corbin** defeated **Ben Sailor** ... **Pete Mack** beat **Radian Silva** ... **Pete Huge** won a three-way dance against **Aaron Corbin** and **Version 2** ... **Cody O'Neil** defeated **Kid Krazy**.
(11-14-04)

—Nicholas Loken

MINNEAPOLIS—WWE at the Target

Center: **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** pinned **Billy Kidman** ... **Mark Jindrak** & **Luther Reigns** beat **Nunzio** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... **Hardcore Holly** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Kenzo Suzuki** defeated **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** and **Rey Misterio Jr.** & **Rob Van Dam** in a three-way elimination match ... Cruiserweight champion **Spike Dudley** defeated **Shannon Moore** and **Funaki** in a three-way match ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Heidenreich** ... U.S. champion **Carlito Caribbean Cool** beat **Eddie Guerrero** by disqualification ... **The Big Show** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** pinned **The Undertaker**.
(10-18-04)

—Steve Grayson

MISSOURI

CAPE GIRARDEAU—Gateway Championship Wrestling at the A.C. Brase Arena: **Trainee #15** pinned **Jackal** ... **Cabal** beat **The Super Castaldis** in a handicap match ... **Mark Sterling** defeated **Mason Hunter** ... **Makaze** & **Cameron Cage** beat **Jimmy Charisma** & **Melvin Talent** ... **Jynx** pinned **Rat Boy** ... Light heavyweight champion **Sean Vincent** beat **Rebecca Raze** ... **Kory Twist** defeated **Michael Strider** ... **Dingo** beat heavyweight champion **Chaz Wesson** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the title.
(11-13-04)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

NEW HAMPSHIRE

NASHUA—AWA Wrestling at St. Stanislaus Hall: **Huey McGraw** & **Ryan Waters** defeated **Flash Farenyte** & **El Loco Mexicano** ... New England champion **Dr. Heresy** defeated **Larry Huntley** ... **Mercedez Martinez** won a three-way match against **Nikki Valentine** and **Lexus** ... **Johnny Vegas** pinned **Babyface Ricky Nelson** ... **Rick Fuller** defeated **Adam Booker**. ... **Otto Von Schwartz** defeated **Greg Valentine** in a steel cage match ... **Maverick Wild** & **Mighty Mini** defeated tag team champs **Christian Angers** & **Ironman Walker** in a steel cage match to win the title.
(10-30-04)

—Rose Marie Minns

NEW YORK

HUDSON FALLS—World of Hurt Wrestling at the Knights of Columbus Hall: Women's champ **Barbie** defeated **Miss DeVille** ... **Chuck Deep** defeated **Bert Williams** in a ladder match to win the vacant cruiserweight title ... **Jeff Starr** & **Nick Neighborhood** defeated **Vendetta** & **Virus** ... Hardcore champ **Punk** defeated **Olaf the Belligerent Scandinavian** ... **Jimmy Jact Cash** defeated **Jimmy Olsen** & **Los Technicos** ... **Reed James** defeated **Shane Alden** ... **Shockwave** defeated **Swinger Sidusky** ... **Danger** & **Vik Dalishus** defeated **Brodie Lee** & **Texas Outlaw** ... **Brodie Lee** won a battle royal.
(11-06-04)

—Sandy Shippley

Nothing like getting double-teamed by Pit Bulls! In this case, it was The Havana Pit Bulls doubling up against B.J. Whitmer. The ROH tag champs were too ferocious for Whitmer and Dan Maff.

NORTH CAROLINA

ASHEBORO—CWF Mid-Atlantic at the Central Boys' & Girls' Club: **Tim Blaze, Garry Stevens**, & **Rob Killjoy** defeated **Rob McBride, J-Money**, & **Flaming Youth II** ... **Kamakazi Kid** & **Jesse Ortega** defeated **Brad Attitude** & **Trent Wylde** ... **Xsiris** & **Mikael Yamaha** defeated **Kid Justice** & **Orlo Helmer** ... **Amber O'Neal** & **GeeStar** defeated **Krissy Vaine** & **Venus** ... Tag team champions **Brass Munkey** & **American Steel Ninja** battled **Mitch Norris** & **Sean Powers** to a double-countout ... Mid-Atlantic champion **Corey Edsel** pinned **Ric Converse**.
(11-13-04)

—Grant Sawyer

OHIO

MIDDLETOWN—Buckeye Pro Wrestling at C.C.'s Showcase: **Dustin Thomas** pinned **Pauly Stugots** ... **Chad Allegra** & **Mongo** defeated **Jimmy Turner** & **Ooga Booga** ... **Cody Hawk** pinned **Dean Jablonski** ... Tag team champions **Lotus** & **Crazy J** defeated **Big Jim Hutchinson** & **Poison** and **Simply Fabulous** in a triple threat match ... **J.T. Stahr** pinned **T.J. Dalton** in a loser-leaves-town match ... **Shark Boy** & **Nate Webb** defeated **Abyss** & **Evil Shark Boy** in a table match.
(11-12-04)

—Debbie Fulton

PENNSYLVANIA

WILMERDING—International Wrestling Cartel at the YMCA: **Bubba the Bulldog** & **Dennis Gregory** beat **Jimmy Vegas** & **Dirk Ciglar** ... **Sebastian Dark** pinned **Jimmy Jacobs** ... **Nate Webb** beat **Sterling James Keenan** ... **Nigel McGuinness** pinned **Claudio Castagnoli** ... Super Indy champion **Chris Sabin** beat **John McChesney** ... **Shiima Xion** & **The Wild Cards** beat **Jason Gory** & **The Gambino Brothers** ... **Dean Radford** pinned **Glenn Spectre** ... **Mahoney** beat heavyweight champion **Shirley Doe** to win the title ... **Samoa Joe** pinned **Chris Hero**.
(11-13-04)

—Joe Dombrowski

JOHNSTOWN—Far North Wrestling at the Westmont Hilltop Grove Community Center: **Jeff Trigona** beat **Sterling James Keenan** ... **Claudio Castagnoli** pinned **Gran Akuma** ... Cruiserweight champion **Kevin Grace** beat **Larry Sweeney** ... Freeweight champion **Mike Quackenbush** defeated **Skayde** ... **Jean Jean LeBon** beat **Shane Storm** ... **Slyk Wagner Brown** wrestled **Dorian Deville** to a no-contest ... **Lord Zoltan** pinned **Doink the Clown** ... Heavyweight champion **T. Rantula** beat **Leslie Leatherman** in a hardcore match.
(11-06-04)

—Timothy A. Walker

McKEESPORT—NWA Pro Wrestling Express at the Sportatorium: **Nikita Allanov** won a three-way match against **Adam Cage** and **Sabotage** ... **Hammer** & **Dash Bennett** defeated **Better Than You** ... **Justin Idol** defeated **Daron Smythe** by disqualification ... **Da Munchies** defeated **Devil Bhudakahn** & **Jason Cage** ... **Joel** & **Jose Maximo** defeated **Psicosis** & **Juventud Guerrera** ... **Spyral** defeated Three Rivers champion **Chris Taylor** ... Heavyweight champion **Brandon K** defeated **Scottie Gash** by submission
(11-06-04)

—Terri Anne Phillips

RHODE ISLAND

NORTH PROVIDENCE—PWF Northeast at the Squared Circle Academy: **Nocturne** pinned **Spider** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Pat Masters** pinned **Riot** ... Tag team champions **Elements of Suicide** defeated **Thrillogy** ... **Triplelicious** pinned **Jason Blade** ... **Kevin Karizma** defeated **Mayhem** ... **Pride** & **Natalia** defeated **Grayson Alexander, Kyle**, & **Alyssa Storm** ... Heavyweight champion **Jose Perez** pinned **Evan Siks**.
(10-29-04)

—Monica Fisher

SOUTH CAROLINA

EASLEY—IWA Flash Fire at the YMCA Gym: U.S. champion **Lance Christopher** defeated **Phillip Pain** ... **Dale Dwindle** beat **Don Matthews** ... Tag team champs **Buford T** & **Tow Truck** won a tag team elimination match against **Big Country** & **Chris Vanadore** and **Executioner** & **Panhead Nelson** ... **Mack Truck** beat **Solitude** ... **The Tower**, **Logan Kincayde**, & **Kevin Blue**, defeated **James Boulevard**, **Rahn Jordan**, & **Boone Daniels**.
(11-06-04)

—Lisa Hanibal

TENNESSEE

MEMPHIS—Memphis Wrestling "Throwback 3" at the Mid-South Coliseum: **Tweak Phoenix** pinned **Bully Douglas** ... **Amber O'Neal** & **Krissy Vaine** defeated **GeeStar** & **April Pennington** ... **Shock** defeated **Johnny Dotson** & **Spiderman** in a hair vs. mask handicap match ... **Bill Dundee** pinned **Kid Kash** ... **Koko B. Ware** pinned **Brain Christopher** in a stun-gun-on-a-pole match ... **Kevin White** & **Brian Christopher** defeated **Too Cool II** ... **Chucky** won a battle royal ... **Corey Macklin**, **Stan Lane**, & **Jackie Fargo** beat **Jerry Lawler**, **Rick Morton**, & **Robert Gibson**.
(10-30-04)

—Grant Sawyer

TEXAS

DENTON—XCW at the XCW Arena: Ironman champ **Kit Karson** defeated **Doink the Clown** in a loser-leaves-XCW match ... **Eric Idol** defeated **Ricky Jackson** ... **Brett Barnes** defeated **Bull** by submission ... **Todd Diamond** defeated **Action Jackson** ... **Gemini** & **Sidd Murder** defeated tag team champions **Scott Phoenix** & **Drunk Adam** to win the title.
(11-12-04)

—Rob Moore

SAN ANTONIO—Christian Wrestling Federation at the Northwest Park Baptist Church: **MACE** defeated **Manny Domingo** ... **Tim Storm** beat **Freight Train Jones** ... **El Tiburon** pinned **The Bishop** ... **Freight Train Jones**, **The Bishop**, & **Manny Domingo** defeated **The Triad**.
(11-07-04)

—Travis McKeon

VIRGINIA

BEDFORD—Southern Championship Wrestling at the YMCA: **Brandon Day** beat **Kid VCW** ... **Krazy K** beat **Alex Sage** ... **Dexter Poindexter** & **Seymour Snott** beat **Ross** & **James Hall** ... **Phil Brown** beat **Dorian DeVille** by disqualification ... **Sean Lei** beat **6D6**.
(10-30-04)

—Greg Mosorjak

WAYNESBORO—Ward Family Entertainment at the High School: **Stro** beat **Kamikaze Kid** ... **Bugsy McGraw** beat **Masked Superstar** by disqualification ... **NWO Sting** & **David Flair** beat **Bodycount** ... **Dusty Rhodes** beat **Kamala** ... **Road Warrior Animal** & **Rick Steiner** beat **The Powers of Pain** ... **The Fantastics** beat **The Original Midnight Express**.
(10-30-04)

—Timothy A. Walker

WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY—WWE at the Resch Center: **Stacy Keibler** & **Victoria** beat **Molly Holly** & **Trish Stratus** ... **Simon Dean** defeated **Val Venis** ... **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Rodney Mack** & **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Gene Snitsky** pinned **Maven** ... **William Regal** & **Eugene** defeated **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** and **Rhyno** & **Tajiri** in an elimination match ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** beat **Christian** ... **Chris Benoit**, **Chris Jericho**, & **Randy Orton** beat **Batista**, **Ric Flair**, & **Triple-H**.
(10-22-04)

—Greg Fisher

INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC—Elite Wrestling Revolution at the Centre Mgr. Marcoux: ***In first-round matches of the Elite 8 Tournament:*** **Hell Storm** beat **Crazy Crusher** ... **Excess** beat **The Arsenal** ... **El Generico** beat **Dan Paysan** ... **Mr. Xtreem** beat **Sexxxy Eddy** ... ***In the semi-finals:*** Hell Storm beat Excess ... El Generico beat Mr. Xtreem by forfeit ... ***Finals:*** El Generico beat Hell Storm ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** **Giovanni** beat **Franky the Mobster** and **Beef Wellington** in a three-way match ... **Los Tabarnacos** & **Kona** beat **Marty Milenko Management** in a tag team elimination match ... **Wonder-Fred** won a six-way match against **Alex Price**, **Kid Kamikaze**, **Justin Diamond**, **Player Uno**, and **Pee-Wee** ... **Steve Corino** beat **Kevin Steen**.
(11-06-04)

—Patrick Mercier

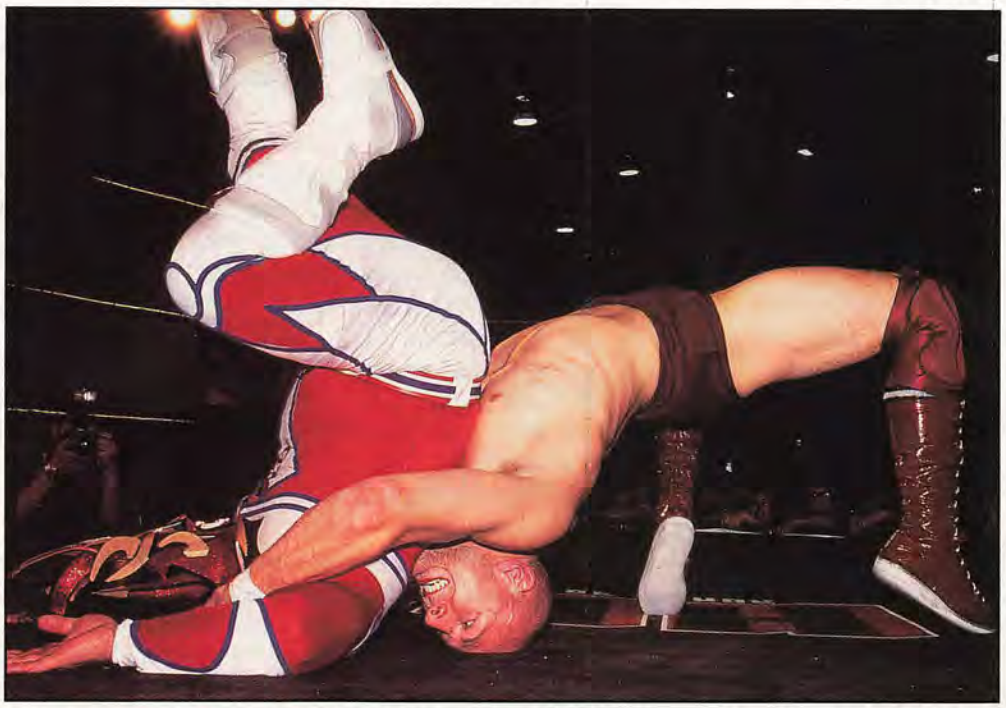
OTTAWA, ONTARIO—WWE at the Civic Centre: Smackdown tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Kenzo Suzuki** beat **Rey Misterio Jr.** & **Rob Van Dam**, **The Basham Brothers**, and **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** in a four-way elimination match ... **Johnny Stamboli** pinned **Luther Reigns** ... Cruiserweight champion **Spike Dudley** defeated **Shannon Moore** and **Funaki** in a three-way match ... U.S. champion **Carlito Caribbean Cool** defeated **Hardcore Holly** ... **The Big Show** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... **Heidenreich** defeated **Rico** ... **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** pinned **Billy Kidman** ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** beat **Booker T**.
(10-23-04)

—Don Fairley

MEXICO

MONTERREY—WWE at Arena Monterrey: Raw tag team champions **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** defeated **Rhyno** & **Tajiri** and **William Regal** & **Eugene** in a three-way elimination match ... **Simon Dean** pinned **Rosey** ... **Maven** beat **Jonathan Coachman** ... **Val Venis** beat **Steven Richards** ... Women's champion **Trish Stratus** defeated **Lita** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Gene Snitsky** pinned **The Hurricane** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Edge** ... **Chris Jericho** & **Randy Orton** defeated **Triple-H** & **Batista** in a steel cage match.
(11-06-04)

—Matt Brock



You could say Jushin Liger bent over backward to give ROH fans great performances in his first appearances in the promotion. Bryan Danielson sort of helped him in that effort.

ROYAL RUMBLE

(January 25, Philadelphia, PA, Wachovia Center)

Raw tag team champions **Batista** & **Ric Flair** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** in a table match ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Jamie Noble** ... **Eddie Guerrero** pinned **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** pinned **Hardcore Holly** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** wrestled to a no-contest with **Shawn Michaels** in a last-man-standing match when neither could get to his feet before the count of 10 ... **Chris Benoit** won the 30-man Royal Rumble, last eliminating **The Big Show**.

NO WAY OUT

(February 15, San Francisco, CA, Cow Palace)

Smackdown tag team champions **Rikishi** & **Scotty Too Hotty** defeated **The Basham Brothers** & **Shaniqua** in a handicap match when Rikishi pinned Shaniqua ... **Jamie Noble** beat **Nidia** by submission (Noble was blindfolded during the match) ... **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq** ... **Hardcore Holly** pinned **Rhyno** ... **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** pinned cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** to win the title ... **Kurt Angle** defeated **The Big Show** and **John Cena** in a three-way match ... **Eddie Guerrero** pinned Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** to win the title.

WRESTLEMANIA XX

(March 14, New York, NY, Madison Square Garden)

John Cena pinned U.S. champion **The Big Show** to win the title ... Raw tag team champions **Booker T** & **Rob Van Dam** defeated **Mark Jindrak** & **Garrison Cade**, **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley**, and **Robert Conway** & **Rene Dupree** in a fatal four-way match when Van Dam pinned Conway ... **Christian** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... **Ric Flair**, **Randy Orton**, & **Batista** beat **Mick Foley** & **The Rock** in a handicap match when Orton pinned Foley ... **Torrie Wilson** & **Sable** defeated **Jackie Gayda** & **Stacy Keibler** in an evening gown match when Wilson pinned Gayda ... Cruiserweight champion **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** won a 10-man cruiserweight gauntlet match, pinning **Rey Misterio Jr.** to win the bout ... **Bill Goldberg** pinned **Brock Lesnar** (**Steve Austin** was the guest referee) ... Smackdown tag team champions **Rikishi** & **Scotty Too Hotty** defeated **The Basham Brothers**, **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas**, and **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq** in a fatal four-way match when Rikishi pinned **Danny Basham** ... Women' s champion **Victoria** pinned **Molly Holly**. As the result of a prematch stipulation, Holly had her head shaved ... Smackdown champion **Eddie Guerrero** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Kane** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated Raw champion **Triple-H** and **Shawn Michaels** in a three-way match to win the title when he forced Triple-H to tap out.

BACKLASH

(April 18, Edmonton, Alberta, Rexall Place)

Shelton Benjamin pinned **Ric Flair** ... **Jonathan Coachman** pinned **Tajiri** after **Garrison Cade** interfered ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Christian** & **Trish Stratus** in a handicap match ... Women's champion **Victoria** pinned **Lita** ... Intercontinental champion **Randy Orton** pinned **Cactus Jack** in a no-holds-barred match ... **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** beat **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** after **Eugene** interfered ... **Edge** pinned **Kane** ... Raw champion **Chris Benoit** beat **Triple-H** and **Shawn Michaels** in a three-way match when he forced Michaels to tap out.

JUDGMENT DAY

(May 16, Los Angeles, CA, Staples Center)

Rey Misterio Jr. & **Rob Van Dam** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Torrie Wilson** pinned **Dawn Marie** ... **Mordecai** pinned **Scotty Too Hotty** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Charlie Haas** & **Rico** defeated **Billy Gunn** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** pinned cruiserweight champion **Jacquelyn** to regain the title ... U.S. champion **John Cena** pinned **Rene Dupree** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Booker T** ... **John Bradshaw Layfield** defeated Smackdown champion **Eddie Guerrero** by disqualification.

BAD BLOOD

(June 13, Columbus, OH, Nationwide Arena)

Chris Benoit & **Edge** defeated Raw tag team champions **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** by disqualification when **Kane** interfered ... **Chris Jericho** pinned **Tyson Tomko** ... Intercontinental champion **Randy Orton** pinned **Shelton Benjamin** ... **Trish Stratus** defeated women's champion **Victoria**, **Gail Kim**, and **Lita** in a four-way match to win the title when she pinned Lita ... **Eugene** pinned **Jonathan Coachman** ... Raw champion **Chris Benoit** pinned **Kane** ... **Triple-H** pinned **Shawn Michaels** in a "Hell In A Cell" match.

GREAT AMERICAN BASH

(June 27, Norfolk, VA, Scope)

U.S. champion **John Cena** defeated **Booker T**, **Rene Dupree**, and **Rob Van Dam** in a four-way elimination match ... **Luther Reigns** pinned **Charlie Haas** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Kenzo Suzuki** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Sable** pinned **Torrie Wilson** ... **Mordecai** pinned **Hardcore Holly** ... **John Bradshaw Layfield** defeated Smackdown champion **Eddie Guerrero** in a bullrope match to win the title ... **The Undertaker** defeated **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** in a handicap match.

VENGEANCE

(July 11, Hartford, CT, Civic Center)

Rhyno & **Tajiri** defeated **Garrison Cade** & **Jonathan Coachman** ... **Batista** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... Raw tag team champions **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Ric Flair** & **Eugene** by disqualification ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Kane** in a no-disqualification match ... **Edge** pinned Intercontinental champion **Randy Orton** to win the title ... **Victoria** pinned **Molly Holly** ... Raw champion **Chris Benoit** pinned **Triple-H**.

Taboo Tuesday: Snitsky vs. Kane

SUMMERSLAM

(August 15, Toronto, Ontario, Air Canada Centre)

Buh Buh Ray, **D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Billy Kidman**, **Paul London**, & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Kane** pinned **Matt Hardy**. Per a prematch stipulation, **Lita** then agreed to marry Kane ... **John Cena** pinned U.S. champion **Booker T** in the first match of a best-of-five series for the championship ... Intercontinental champion **Edge** defeated **Chris Jericho** and **Batista** in a three-way match when he pinned Jericho ... **Kurt Angle** beat **Eddie Guerrero** by submission ... **Triple-H** pinned **Eugene** ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** defeated **The Undertaker** by disqualification ... **Randy Orton** pinned Raw champion **Chris Benoit** to win the title.

UNFORGIVEN

(September 12, Portland, OR, Rose Garden)

Chris Benoit & **William Regal** defeated **Batista** & **Ric Flair** ... Women's champion **Trish Stratus** pinned **Victoria** ... **Tyson Tomko** pinned **Steven Richards** ... **Chris Jericho** beat **Christian** in a ladder match to win the vacant Intercontinental title ... **Shawn Michaels** pinned **Kane** in a no-disqualification match ... Raw tag team champions **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** defeated **Rhyno** & **Tajiri** ... **Triple-H** pinned Raw champion **Randy Orton** to regain the title.

NO MERCY

(October 3, East Rutherford, NJ, Continental Airlines Arena)

Eddie Guerrero pinned **Luther Reigns** ... Cruiserweight champion **Spike Dudley** pinned **Nunzio** ... **Billy Kidman** pinned **Paul London** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Kenzo Suzuki** beat **Rey Misterio Jr.** & **Rob Van Dam** ... **The Big Show** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... **John Cena** pinned U.S. champion **Booker T** in the final match of their best-of-five series to win the title ... **Charlie Haas**, **Rico**, & **Jackie Gayda** defeated **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** & **Dawn Marie** ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** defeated **The Undertaker** after **Heidenreich** interfered.

TABOO TUESDAY

(October 19, Milwaukee, WI, Bradley Center)

Shelton Benjamin pinned Intercontinental champion **Chris Jericho** to win the title ... Women's champion **Trish Stratus** won a battle royal, last eliminating **Molly Holly** ... **Gene Snitsky** pinned **Kane** in a match in which the use of a steel chain was legal ... **Eugene** pinned **Eric Bischoff** in a hair vs. hair match ... **Chris Benoit** & **Edge** defeated Raw tag team champions **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** to win the title when Benoit forced Conway to tap out after Edge walked out on the match ... **Christy Hemme** beat **Carmella DeCesare** in a lingerie pillow fight ... Raw champion **Triple-H** pinned **Shawn Michaels** after **Edge** interfered ... **Randy Orton** defeated **Ric Flair** in a steel cage match.

SURVIVOR SERIES

(November 14, Cleveland, OH, Gund Arena)

Cruiserweight champion **Spike Dudley** defeated **Billy Kidman**, **Chavo Guerrero Jr.**, and **Rey Misterio Jr.** in a four-way match when he pinned Guerrero ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **The Big Show**, **John Cena**, **Eddie Guerrero**, & **Rob Van Dam** beat **Kurt Angle**, **Carlito Caribbean Cool**, **Mark Jindrak**, & **Luther Reigns** in an elimination match (Show, Cena, & Guerrero were the survivors) ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Heidenreich** ... Women's champion **Trish Stratus** defeated **Lita** by disqualification ... Smackdown champion **John Bradshaw Layfield** pinned **Booker T** ... **Chris Benoit**, **Chris Jericho**, **Maven**, **Randy Orton** defeated **Batista**, **Edge**, **Triple-H**, & **Gene Snitsky** (Orton was the only survivor).

[Editor's note: All of the TNA pay-per-views listed on these four pages were held at the Fairgrounds Coliseum in Nashville, Tennessee, with the exception of the last two—November 7 and December 5—which were held at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida.]

JANUARY 7

Abyss, **Legend**, & **Kevin Northcutt** defeated **A.J. Styles**, **Chris Harris**, & **James Storm** ... NWA tag team champions **B.G. James** & **Ron Killings** beat **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** ... **Chris Vaughn** pinned **Kid Kash** ... **Julio Dinero** & **C.M. Punk** defeated **Raven** & **The Sandman** ... **Chris Sabin** defeated TNA X champion **Michael Shane**, **Christopher Daniels**, and **Low-Ki** in a four-way "Ultimate X" match to win the title.

JANUARY 14

Chris Harris & **James Storm** defeated **Kevin Northcutt** & **Legend** ... **Michael Shane** defeated **Christopher Daniels** and **Low-Ki** in a three-way match ... **David Young** pinned **Simon Diamond** ... **Shane Douglas** defeated **Elix Skipper** ... **Kid Kash** pinned **Chris Vaughn** ... **Julio Dinero** & **C.M. Punk** defeated **The Sandman** (whose partner, **Raven**, refused to show up) in a handicap Singapore canes-on-poles match ... **A.J. Styles** & **Erik Watts** defeated **Jeff Jarrett** & **Abyss**.

JANUARY 21

Julio Dinero & **C.M. Punk** beat **Mahoney** & **The Sandman** ... **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** defeated **Glenn Gilberti** & **David Young** ... **D-Lo Brown** pinned **Sonny Siaki** ... **Shane Douglas** & **Michael Shane** beat **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** ... **Legend** & **Kevin Northcutt** beat **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** wrestled to a no-contest with **El Leon** in a streetfight.

JANUARY 28

Abyss pinned **D-Lo Brown** ... TNA X champion **Chris Sabin** pinned **Michael Shane** ... **Julio Dinero** & **C.M. Punk** defeated **The Sandman** & **Mikey Whipwreck** ... **Mr. Aguila**, **Juventud Guerrera**, **Abismo Negro**, & **Hector Garza** defeated **Chad Collyer**, **Shark Boy**, **Eric Young**, & **Matt Stryker** ... **Legend** & **Kevin Northcutt** beat NWA tag team champions **B.G. James** & **Ron Killings** to win the title ... **Don Callis** pinned **Erik Watts**.

FEBRUARY 4

The Insane Clown Posse defeated **Glenn Gilberti** & **David Young** ... **Sonny Siaki** pinned **Kid Kash** ... **Abyss** defeated **El Leon** by disqualification ... **Julio Dinero** & **C.M. Punk** beat **Terry Funk** & **The Sandman** ... **A.J. Styles** defeated NWA tag team champions **Legend** & **Kevin Northcutt** for the title (his partner, **Abyss**, refused to come out for the match) ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **Dustin Rhodes**.

FEBRUARY 18

Jerry Lynn, **Sonjay Dutt**, **Chris Sabin**, & **Elix Skipper** beat **Jason Cross**, **Roderick Strong**, **Jimmy Rave**, & **Shark Boy** ... **Michael Shane** pinned **Ron Killings** ... **Dustin Rhodes** & **El Leon** defeated **Legend** & **Kevin Northcutt** ... **A.J. Styles** beat **Abyss** by disqualification ... **The Insane Clown Posse** beat **Glenn Gilberti** & **Kid Kash** ... **Terry Funk** & **Raven** defeated **Julio Dinero** & **C.M. Punk** ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **Chris Harris**.

FEBRUARY 25

Petey Williams defeated **Juventud Guerrera** and **Jerry Lynn** in a three-way match ... **Simon Diamond** defeated **Johnny Swinger** by disqualification ... **Shane Douglas** & **Michael Shane** beat **Ron Killings** & **Konnan** ... **Chris Harris** pinned **Chase Stevens** ... **Chris Harris** pinned **Andy Douglas** ... **Chris**

January 21: Trinity & Siaki attack Kash

Harris defeated **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** in a handicap match ... **Raven** & **Sabu** defeated **Julio Dinero** & **C.M. Punk** ... **Abyss** defeated **A.J. Styles** to win possession of both NWA tag team belts after **Lex Luger** interfered.

MARCH 3

Chris Harris pinned **Kevin Northcutt** ... **Simon Diamond**, **D-Lo Brown**, **Ron Killings**, **Konnan**, & **Sonny Siaki** defeated **Kid Kash**, **Glenn Gilberti**, **David Young**, **Johnny Swinger**, & **Michael Shane** ... **Frankie Kazarian** pinned **Jerry Lynn** ... **Sonjay Dutt**, **Chris Sabin**, & **Elix Skipper** beat **Kuishinbo Kamen**, **Ebessan**, & **Nosawa** ... **A.J. Styles** wrestled to a no-contest with **Abyss** in a falls-count-anywhere match ... **Chris Harris** pinned **Shane Douglas**.

MARCH 17

Frankie Kazarian pinned **Elix Skipper** ... **Monty Brown** pinned **Chris Vaughn** ... **James Storm** pinned **Shane Douglas** ... **Ron Killings** won a 10-man Royal Rumble-style battle royal, last eliminating **Michael Shane** ... **Abyss** defeated **A.J. Styles** in a ladder match ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **Chris Harris**.

MARCH 24

Quarterfinal matches in the tournament for the vacant NWA tag team title: **Christopher Daniels** & **Low-Ki** defeated **Shane Douglas** & **Michael Shane** ... **Sinn** & **Slash** beat **Glenn Gilberti** & **David Young** ... **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** beat **Simon Diamond** & **Sonny Siaki** ... **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** defeated **B.G. James** & **Konnan** ... ***Non-tournament matches:*** **Ron Killings** wrestled to a no-contest with **Abyss** ... **The Amazing Red** won a six-way match to earn a shot at the TNA X title, defeating **Frankie Kazarian**, **Jerry Lynn**, **Nosawa**, **Elix Skipper**, and **Petey Williams**.

MARCH 31

Semifinal matches in the tournament for the vacant NWA tag team title: **Christopher Daniels** & **Low-Ki** defeated **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** ... **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** beat **Sinn** & **Slash** ... **Sabu** wrestled to a no-contest with **Monty Brown** ... **D-Lo Brown** & **Apolo** beat **Glenn Gilberti** & **David Young**, **Simon Diamond** & **Sonny Siaki**, and **Shane Douglas** & **Michael Shane** in a four-way elimination match ... **Frankie Kazarian** pinned **The Amazing Red** to win the vacant TNA X title ... **Raven** defeated **Ron Killings**, **Abyss**, and **A.J. Styles** in a four-way match.

APRIL 14

NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **James Storm** in a non-title match ... TNA X champion **Frankie Kazarian** pinned **Sonjay Dutt** ... **Simon Diamond** pinned **Johnny Swinger** ... **Monty Brown** pinned **Sabu** in a falls-count-anywhere match ... **Apolo** & **D-Lo Brown** defeated NWA tag team champions **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** by disqualification to win the title (titles can change hands via DQ in TNA) ... **Chris Harris** pinned **Raven**.

APRIL 21

Abyss & **Monty Brown** defeated **Sabu** (whose partner, **Raven**, refused to come out for the match) in a handicap match ... **Shark Boy** pinned **David Young** ... **Glenn Gilberti** & **Johnny Swinger** defeated **Simon Diamond** & **Sonny Siaki** ... **Christopher Daniels** pinned **Michael Shane** ... **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** defeated NWA tag team champions **Apolo** & **D-Lo Brown** by disqualification to win the title ... **A.J. Styles** (substituting for **Chris Harris**, who was attacked and injured by **Raven** earlier in the show) pinned NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** to win the title.

APRIL 28

Christopher Daniels, **Chris Sabin**, **Jerry Lynn**, & **Elix Skipper** defeated **Hector Garza**, **Abismo Negro**, **Heavy Metal**, & **Mr. Aguila** ... NWA tag team champions **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** beat **D-Lo Brown** & **Apolo** in a nightstick-on-a-pole match ... **Sabu** defeated **Abyss** by disqualification ... **Sonny Siaki**, **Pat Kenney** (formerly **Simon Diamond**), & **Desire** beat **Glenn Gilberti**, **Johnny Swinger**, & **Trinity** ... **Raven** pinned **James Storm** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Ron Killings**.

MAY 5

Sonjay Dutt pinned **The Amazing Red** ... **Shane Douglas** pinned **Michael Shane** ... **Johnny Devine**, **Petey Williams**, **Bobby Rude**, & **Eric Young** beat **Christopher Daniels**, **Elix Skipper**, **Jerry Lynn**, & **Chris Sabin** ... **Trinity** pinned **Desire** ... **Abyss** pinned **Erik Watts** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Raven**.

MAY 12

James Storm pinned **Kid Kash** ... **Monty Brown** defeated **B.G. James** ... **The Amazing Red** pinned **Sonjay Dutt** ... **Shane Douglas** defeated **Michael Shane** in a corporal punishment match (the use of paddles and leather straps was legal) ... **Bobby Rude** & **Petey Williams** defeated **Hector Garza** & **Abismo Negro** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Chris Harris**.

MAY 19

Jerry Lynn pinned **Bobby Rude** ... **D-Ray 3000** pinned **David Young** ... **Mr. Aguila**, **Abismo Negro**, & **Heavy Metal** defeated **Mitsu Hirai Jr.**, **Ryuji Hijikata**, & **Nosawa** ... **The Amazing Red** pinned **Sonjay Dutt** ... **Dusty Rhodes** & **James Storm** beat NWA tag team champions **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** in a non-title

bunkhouse match ... **Ron Killings** defeated NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles**, **Raven**, and **Chris Harris** in a four-way match to win the title.

JUNE 2

Bobby Rude & **Petey Williams** beat **Jerry Lynn** & **Heavy Metal** ... **Monty Brown** pinned **Sonny Siaki** ... TNA X champion **Frankie Kazarian** pinned **The Amazing Red** ... **Abyss** pinned **D-Ray 3000** ... NWA tag team champions **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** defeated **Dusty Rhodes** & **James Storm** ... **Jeff Jarrett** defeated NWA heavyweight champion **Ron Killings**, **A.J. Styles**, **Raven**, and **Chris Harris** in a five-way "King Of The Mountain" match to regain the title.

JUNE 9

NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Glenn Gilberti** & **Johnny Swinger** ... **Michael Shane** pinned **Chris Sabin** ... **Sonjay Dutt** beat **Shark Boy**, **David Young**, and **D-Ray 3000** in a four-way match ... **Bobby Rude**, **Petey Williams**, & **Eric Young** beat **Jerry Lynn**, **Heavy Metal**, & **Hector Garza** ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **Konnan** in a non-title strap match ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **B.G. James** in a non-title trailer park match ... **Ron Killings** pinned NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** in a non-title ghetto match ... **A.J. Styles** pinned TNA X champion **Frankie Kazarian** to win the title.

JUNE 16

B.G. James, **Ron Killings**, & **Konnan** defeated **Chad Collyer**, **Onyx**, & **Hotstuff Hernandez** ... **Trinity** pinned **Angel Williams** ... **Pat Kenney** & **Sonny Siaki** beat **Glenn Gilberti** & **Johnny Swinger** in an "Ultimate Humiliation" match ... **Raven** defeated **Sonjay Dutt** ... TNA X champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Dallas** ... NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** beat **Monty Brown** & **Abyss** by disqualification ... **Bobby Rude**, **Eric Young**, & **Petey Williams** defeated **Jerry Lynn**, **Chris Sabin**, & **Elix Skipper** in a flag match.

JUNE 23

NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Miyamoto** & **Nosawa** ... **Trinity** defeated **Desire** in a stretcher match ... **Jerry Lynn** pinned **Scott D'Amore** ... **Mascarita Sagrada** pinned **Mini Pierroth** ... TNA X champion **A.J. Styles** wrestled to a no-contest with **Jeff Hardy** ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** defeated **Ron Killings** by disqualification.

JUNE 30

Sonjay Dutt & **Sabu** defeated **Bobby Rude** & **Petey Williams** ... **Monty Brown** wrestled to a double-countout with **D-Lo Brown** ... **Pat Kenney** & **Sonny Siaki** beat **Glenn Gilberti** & **Johnny Swinger** ... **Abyss** pinned **Erik Watts** ... **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** defeated NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** in a non-title match ... TNA X champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Michael Shane**, **Elix Skipper**, **Frankie Kazarian**, **The Amazing Red**, and **Chris Sabin** in a six-way match when he pinned Red.

JULY 7

Frankie Kazarian & **Michael Shane** defeated **D-Ray 3000** & **Shark Boy** ... **Monty Brown** pinned **D-Lo Brown** ... **Big Vito** & **Trinity** beat **Sonny Siaki** & **Desire** ... **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** beat NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** to win the title ... **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** beat **Bobby Rude** & **Petey Williams** and **The Amazing Red** & **Chris Sabin** in a three-way match ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** won the "Gauntlet For The Gold" battle royal by pinning **Ron Killings** at the end.

JULY 14

Michael Shane defeated TNA X champion **A.J. Styles** in a non-title bout when Styles injured his knee and could not continue ... **Abyss** & **Alex Shelley** defeated **Sonjay Dutt** & **Sabu** ... **Chris Sabin**, **Elix Skipper**, **The Amazing Red**, & **Christopher Daniels** beat **Johnny Devine**, **Eric Young**, **Bobby Rude**, & **Petey Williams** ... **Ron Killings**, **B.G. James**, **Konnan**, **Dusty Rhodes**, & **Larry Zbyszko** defeated **Jeff Jarrett**, **Chad Collyer**, **Onyx**, **Ken Shamrock**, & **Hotstuff Hernandez** in a guitar-on-a-pole match ... **Frankie Kazarian** pinned TNA X champion **A.J. Styles** in a non-title match ... **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** in a non-title double-ladder match.

JULY 21

Christopher Daniels & **Elix Skipper** beat **Mr. Aguila** & **Abismo Negro** ... **Big Vito** pinned **Pat Kenney** in a Sicilian streetfight ... **D-Ray 3000**, **Shark Boy**, & **Mike Posey** defeated **Johnny Swinger** & **David Young** ... **Abyss** pinned **Sabu** ... **Jerry Lynn** & **Chris Sabin** defeated **Frankie Kazarian** & **Michael Shane** ... NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** defeated **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** in a steel cage match.

JULY 28

Chris Harris & **James Storm** defeated **Bobby Rude** & **Petey Williams** ... **Abyss** & **Alex Shelley** beat **Shark Boy** & **D-Ray 3000** ... **Mike Posey** pinned **David Young** ... NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** beat **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** ... **Jeff Hardy** pinned **Monty Brown** ... **Frankie Kazarian** and **Michael Shane** co-won the TNA X title from champion **A.J. Styles** in an "Ultimate X" match when both grabbed the title belt suspended over the ring and landed on the mat at the same time.

AUGUST 4

Raven pinned **Sabu** ... **Abyss** pinned **Sonny Siaki** ... **Frankie Kazarian** & **Michael Shane** defeated **Jerry Lynn** & **Chris Sabin** ... **Pat Kenney** defeated **Big Vito** in a weapons match ... **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** beat **Bobby Rude** & **Petey Williams** in a country whipping match ... **A.J. Styles** pinned **Kid Kash**.

AUGUST 11

B.G. James & **Konnan** defeated **Johnny Devine** & **Eric Young** ... **Alex Shelley** pinned **Ekmo (Jamal)** ... **David Young** pinned **Glenn Gilberti** ... **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** beat **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** ... **Petey Williams** won a 23-man gauntlet match to win the X title previously co-held by **Michael Shane** & **Frankie Kazarian**.

AUGUST 18

Sonjay Dutt (substituting for an injured **Sabu**) defeated **Raven** in a "Hangman's Horror" match ... TNA X champion **Petey Williams** pinned **Chris Sabin** ... **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** defeated **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** ... **Monty Brown** pinned **Ron Killings** ... NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** beat **B.G. James** & **Konnan** ... **A.J. Styles** pinned **Kid Kash** in a streetfight.

AUGUST 25

Frankie Kazarian & **Michael Shane** defeated **Psicosis** & **L.A. Park** ... **Impostor L.A. Park** (who unmasked to reveal he was **Erik Watts**) beat **Alex Shelley** ... **Sonjay Dutt** won a four-way match over **Jason Cross**, **Joey Matthews**, and **Chris Sabin** ... **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** wrestled to a no-contest with **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** ... **Johnny Devine**, **Scott D'Amore**, & **Eric Young** defeated **B.G. James** & **Konnan** by disqualification in a handicap match ... **Jeff Hardy**, **Ron Killings**, & **A.J. Styles** beat **Kid Kash**, **Dallas**, & **Monty Brown**.

SEPTEMBER 1

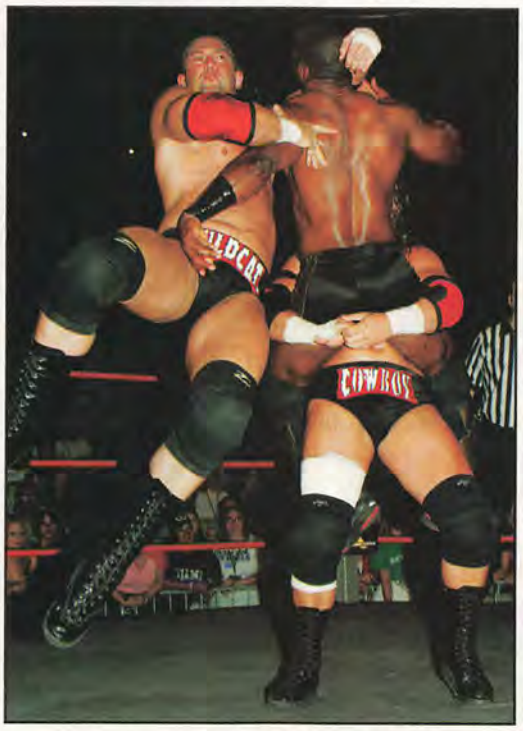
NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** defeated **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** and **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** in a three-way match ... **Frankie Kazarian** & **Michael Shane** beat **The Amazing Red** & **Chris Sabin** ... TNA X champion **Petey Williams** pinned **Sonjay Dutt** ... **B.G. James**, **Konnan**, & **The Midnight Rider** defeated **Johnny Devine**, **Bobby Rude**, & **Eric Young** ... **Sonny Siaki** & **Erik Watts** beat **Abyss** & **Alex Shelley** ... **Ron Killings** & **A.J. Styles** defeated **Kid Kash** & **Dallas** in a streetfight.

SEPTEMBER 8

Mikey Batts & **Jerrelle Clark** won a six-team battle royal ... **Sonny Siaki**, **Erik Watts**, & **Desire** defeated **Abyss**, **Alex Shelley**, & **Goldylocks** ... **A.J. Styles** beat **Kid Kash** in a best-of-three table match series ... **Dusty Rhodes** pinned **Scott D'Amore** ... **Chris Harris** & **Elix Skipper** defeated NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** for the belts ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **Jeff Hardy**.

NOVEMBER 7 (VICTORY ROAD)

Hector Garza won a 20-man X division battle royal, last pinning **Frankie Kazarian** ... **Johnny B. Badd**, **"Empire Saint" Pat Kenney**, **Ron Killings**, & **Erik Watts** defeated **Andy Douglas**, **Chase Stevens**, **Kid Kash**, & **Dallas** ... **Mascarita Sagrada** pinned **Piratita Morgan** ... **B.G. James** & **Konnan** beat NWA tag team champions **Bobby Rude** & **Eric Young** to win the title ... **Trinity** pinned **Jacquelyn** ... **Monty Brown** defeated **Raven** and **Abyss** in a three-way "Monsters' Ball" match ... TNA X champion **Petey Williams** pinned **A.J. Styles** ... **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** in a last-team-standing match ... NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** pinned **Jeff Hardy** in a ladder match.



November 7: Harris & Storm vs. Skipper

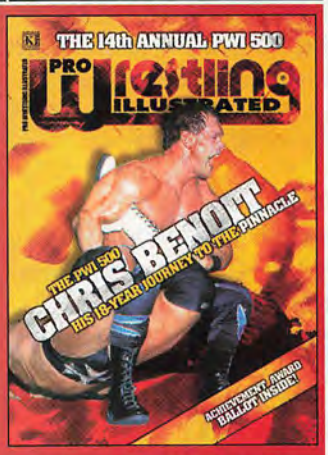
DECEMBER 5 (TURNING POINT)

Bobby Rude & **Eric Young** defeated NWA tag team champions **B.G. James** & **Ron Killings** (substituting for **Konnan**) to win the title ... **Sonjay Dutt**, **Hector Garza**, & **Sonny Siaki** beat **Frankie Kazarian**, **Kid Kash**, & **Michael Shane** ... **Monty Brown** defeated **Abyss** in a "Serengeti Survival" match ... **Johnny B. Badd** & **Pat Kenney** beat **Glenn Gilberti** & **Johnny Swinger** (**Jacquelyn** was the guest referee) ... **Dallas Page** pinned **Raven** ... TNA X champion **Petey Williams** pinned **Chris Sabin** ... **Jeff Hardy**, **Randy Savage**, & **A.J. Styles** defeated **Scott Hall**, **Jeff Jarrett**, & **Kevin Nash** when Savage pinned Jarrett ... **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** in a steel cage match in which the losing team was to split up forever afterward.

between falls

PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED welcomes readers' comments on any of our stories or columns. Send letters to: BETWEEN FALLS Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or you can e-mail your comments to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com
Letters preceded by a ☎ indicate letters left by fans on the *PWI* Hotline (1-900-226-4PWI; see ad elsewhere in this issue).

JUST DESSERTS



It's been a long road for Chris Benoit, but "The Crippler" was finally named the top wrestler in the "*PWI* 500" in the December 2004 issue. Although Benoit dropped the title to Randy Orton just as the rankings were finalized, he remained the overwhelming choice for the top spot. More readers agreed with our decision than any year in recent memory, which is either a testament to Benoit's skills, or an indictment of the lack of true superstars in wrestling.

"For years, Benoit was one of wrestling's most underrated stars," wrote Will Smith of Spencerport, New York. "I'd like to thank you for validating what I've said for years—Benoit is the best in the game."

"The only person I could imagine taking the top spot over Benoit would be Eddie Guerrero, and Guerrero blew it once he dropped the belt to JBL," wrote Ryan Szpylman of Chicopee, Massachusetts.

Of course, there were still a few readers who disagreed with our choice.

"I think you guys dropped the ball by not ranking A.J. Styles number one," opined Eric Close of Robbinsdale, Minnesota. "Just because he doesn't get the press Benoit does doesn't mean he's inferior."

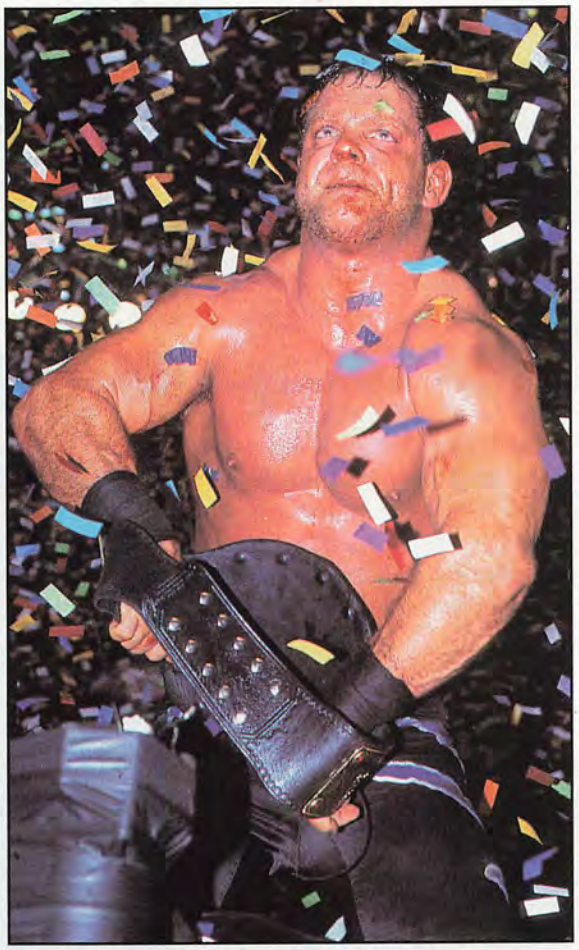
MORE PROPS FOR BENOIT

I have never agreed with the number-one ranking in any "*PWI* 500" listing, but Chris Benoit taking this year's top spot seemed almost inevitable. In terms of diverse competition, no one even compares to Benoit. Congratulations to you, Chris Benoit. It's been a long time coming, and this honor is well-deserved.

JEFF JUDD
Greenville, PA

It's about time that Chris Benoit was recognized for his greatness! I can't believe that it took you guys this long to do it. Benoit's been a favorite of mine ever since my brother forced me to watch a tape of the 1994 Super J Cup from Japan. I became a diehard fan when he showed up here in Philly for ECW. I've gotten to finally see him climb to the top—and it's great that someone other than me is recognizing him for being the best!

MIKE BEECHMAN
Cherry Hill, NJ



The celebration for Chris Benoit's rise to the top continues. His number-one ranking in the "*PWI* 500" wasn't opposed by too many fans. It might be the first time in the 14-year history of the list that the majority of fans agreed with us.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

I can only imagine how difficult it must be to coordinate such a sprawling project as the "*PWI* 500," and all the writers, editors, photographers, and graphic artists who contributed to this year's effort deserve to be commended. While I thoroughly enjoyed the "500," I have a few suggestions I would like to make that could help you further improve the "500" for next year.

I understand space constrictions dictate what you can do with a magazine, but I'd love to see more photographs in the 500, especially of the independent wrestlers who don't otherwise get much coverage from your family of magazines. Obviously, not everyone can get a picture, but the more the better as far as I'm concerned.

Second, you should allot a certain number of spots based on region. For example, you could set aside 200 spots for national and developmental wrestlers (WWE and TNA), 75 for Mexican and Japanese competitors, 30 for European wrestlers, 60 spots for Northeastern indy wrestlers, 30 for Midwestern

wrestlers, 50 for Southern/Florida wrestlers, and 25 for Canadians. That leaves 30 extra spots to fill as you see fit. You could change up the allotments, but this way, we could get a better geographic representation of the top wrestlers in the world.

Finally, it would be great if you could expand the "Farewell To The 500" section. I'd like to know why certain wrestlers simply drop out of the listings, particularly indy wrestlers who haven't significantly cut back on their schedules. Just a line or two on each wrestler explaining why they were dropped would be great.

Those are just my ideas; do with them what you will. Congratulations on putting out such a fine publication.

DANIEL SHEA
Minnetonka, MN

ROH CONVERT

After 2 ½ years of hearing nothing but incredible things about Ring of Honor, I decided to look into it. Thanks to a friend, I got my hands on the *Era Of Honor Begins* tape, and I fell in love with pro wrestling all over again. The best part was days later when I managed to attend the October 15 Dayton show. Watching Rick Steamboat and Mick Foley in person was one of those rare moments, so much so that when both were only a few feet away from me later on in the evening, I couldn't say anything.

But the wrestling itself is truly awesome. The Ring of Honor heavyweight title match between Samoa Joe and Rocky Romero had its great moments, but the six-man tag that was the main event (C.M. Punk, Jimmy Jacobs, and Ace Steel vs. Austin Aries, Alex Shelley, and Roderick Strong) took my breath away. The near-falls were made even more emotional due to the fact that Steamboat was at ringside—and "The Dragon" knows all about near-falls.

Ring of Honor is now way ahead of the WWE in my book, and I've already started my DVD collection.

NATHAN P. DAVIS
Muncie, IN

WORDS FROM "ALPHA FAN"

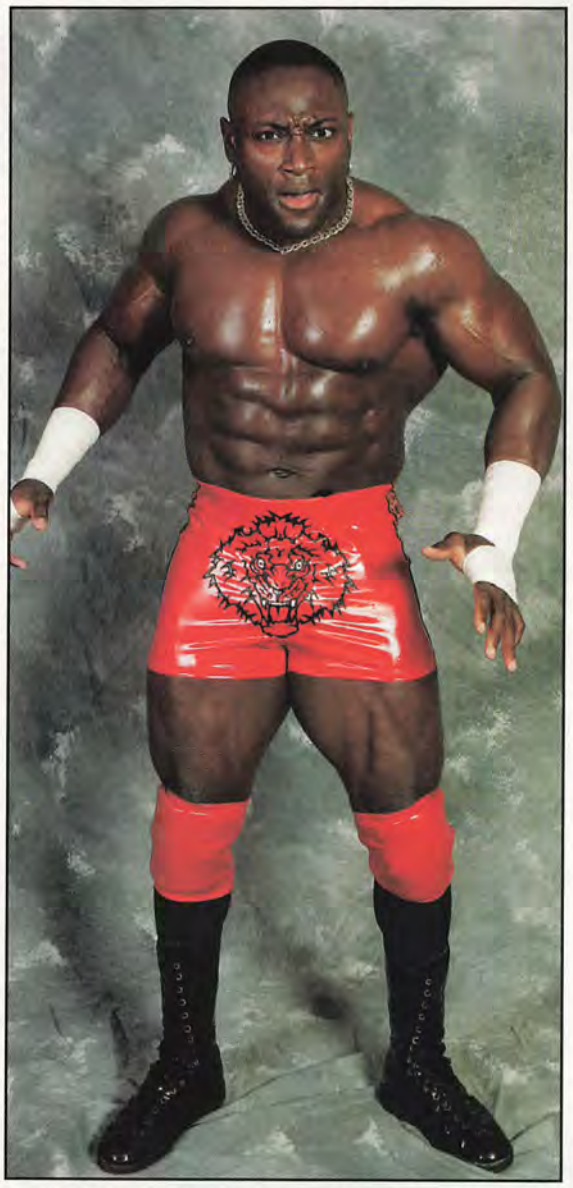
I have to admit that I'm impressed with Monty Brown.

"The Alpha Male" reminds me of a young and far more charismatic Bill Goldberg. He's got that superstar look and that explosive pounce finisher. I think it's only a matter of time before we see the NWA heavyweight title wrapped around his waist.

I know there are plenty of haters out there who claim Brown is one-dimensional and not a strong technical wrestler, but I think there are too many technical wrestlers out there today. I long for the glory days of Hulk Hogan, Goldberg, The Road Warriors, and The Ultimate Warrior. Those intense power wrestlers of yesteryear may be out of style today, but they were far more exciting to me than a bunch of 160-pound guys doing backflips. The difference between "The Alpha Male" and the X division is the difference between the hard-hitting Philadelphia Flyers and figure skating.

Say it once with me: Monty Brown, the future of wrestling.

DENNIS DORGAN
Wichita, KS □



Monty Brown impresses reader Dennis Dorgan just as much as Brown impresses us. Dorgan likes how Brown reminds him of legendary powerhouses like The Road Warriors and Hulk Hogan.

PWI Hotline Extra!

Your answers to our question of the week!

Question of the Week: What are your thoughts on the Raw diva search and Smackdown's *Tough Enough* competition? Do they these reality contests have a place on pro wrestling broadcasts? (November 4 to 10, 2004)

Hotline callers respond: "I wasn't a fan of the diva search, but I don't mind *Tough Enough*," said Kevin Gerace of Hamilton, Ontario. "At least *Tough Enough* is ostensibly about wrestlers and not eye candy."

"I can't stand that crap," said Melissa Curtis of Pensacola, Florida. "I tune in to *Raw* and *Smackdown* to see wrestling, not game shows. I bet WWE wouldn't be dedicating so much air time to this garbage if WCW was still around to oppose it!"

"At least WWE is trying to keep things interesting by changing things up," said Patrick Rank of Portland, Oregon. "What would you rather watch: Carmella and Christy in a pillow fight, or Stevie Richards vs. Garrison Cade? Sometimes even passionate wrestling fans can use a break from wrestling."

2004 PWI Achievement: Past Award Winners

This is a complete listing of all *PWI* Achievement Award winners. We've also provided a comprehensive listing of runners-up (which were first reported in 1976) for all awards.

Award winners were first presented annually in the pages of Pro Wrestling Illustrated effective with our March 1982 issue. Prior to that, awards appeared in *Sports Review Wrestling* (1980 awards in the March 1981 edition), *Sports Review Wrestling Annual* (1977-'79 awards in Spring 1978, '79, and '80 editions), and *Victory Sports Series Wrestling Annual* and *Yearbook* editions (1972-'76 awards in issues #4, 7, 11, 14, and 18).

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

2003: Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Brock Lesnar, 2—Triple-H, 3—A.J. Styles

2002: Brock Lesnar
Runners-up: 1—Rob Van Dam, 2—Triple-H, 3—The Undertaker

2001: Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—Kurt Angle, 2—The Rock, 3—Rob Van Dam

2000: The Rock
Runners-up: 1—Triple-H, 2—Booker T, 3—Kurt Angle

1999: Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—The Rock, 2—Sting, 3—Tazz

1998: Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—Bill Goldberg, 2—Dallas Page, 3—Rocky Maivia

1997: Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—The Undertaker, 3—Dallas Page

1996: The Giant
Runners-up: 1—Shawn Michaels, 2—Ric Flair, 3—Ahmed Johnson

Bob Backlund: 1982

1995: Diesel
Runners-up: 1—Shawn Michaels, 2—Sting, 3—Hulk Hogan

1994: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Bret Hart, 2—Razor Ramon, 3—Ric Flair

1993: Big Van Vader
Runners-up: 1—Bret Hart, 2—Shawn Michaels, 3—Yokozuna

1992: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Ron Simmons, 2—Rick Rude, 3—Bret Hart

1991: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Lex Luger, 2—Bret Hart, 3—Sting

1990: Sting
Runners-up: 1—Ultimate Warrior, 2—Hulk Hogan, 3—Lex Luger

1989: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Lex Luger, 3—Rick Steamboat

1988: Randy Savage
Runners-up: 1—Jerry Lawler, 2—Lex Luger, 3—Ric Flair

1987: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Randy Savage, 3—Steve Williams

1986: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Randy Savage, 3—Nikita Koloff

1985: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Rick Martel, 3—Sgt. Slaughter

1984: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Kerry Von Erich, 3—Rick Martel

1983: Harley Race
Runners-up: 1—Nick Bockwinkel, 2—Andre the Giant, 3—Bob Backlund

1982: Bob Backlund
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Hulk Hogan, 3—Jimmy Snuka

1981: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund, 2—Tommy Rich, 3—Dusty Rhodes

1980: Bob Backlund
Runners-up: 1—Harley Race, 2—Verne Gagne, 3—The Iron Sheik

1979: Harley Race
Runners-up: 1—Dusty Rhodes, 2—Jimmy Snuka, 3—Bob Backlund

1978: Dusty Rhodes
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund, 2—Rick Steamboat, 3—Harley Race

1977: Dusty Rhodes
Runners-up: 1—Superstar Graham, 2—Bob Backlund, 3—Harley Race

1976: Terry Funk
Runners-up: 1—Bruno Sammartino, 2—Nick Bockwinkel, 3—Paul Jones

1975: Mr. Wrestling II

1974: Bruno Sammartino

1973: Jack Brisco

1972: Pedro Morales

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

2003: Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas
Runners-up: 1—Chris Harris & James Storm, 2—Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley, 3—Eddie & Chavo Guerrero Jr.

2002: Billy Gunn & Chuck Palumbo
Runners-up: 1—Booker T & Goldust, 2—Jamal & Rosey, 3—Kurt Angle & Chris Benoit

2001: Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley
Runners-up: 1—Kane & The Undertaker, 2—The Hardy Boyz, 3—The Acolytes

2000: The Hardy Boyz
Runners-up: 1—Christian & Edge, 2—Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley, 3—Kronik

1999: Kane & X-Pac
Runners-up: 1—The Hardy Boyz, 2—Harlem Heat, 3—Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley

1998: Billy Gunn & Jesse James
Runners-up: 1—Sabu & Rob Van Dam, 2—Kane & Mankind, 3—Kane & The Undertaker

1997: Scott Hall & Kevin Nash
Runners-up: 1—Rick & Scott Steiner, 2—The Road Warriors, 3—Lex Luger & The Giant

1996: Harlem Heat
Runners-up: 1—The Eliminators, 2—Rick & Scott Steiner, 3—The

Gangstas

1995: Harlem Heat
Runners-up: 1—The Smokin' Gunns, 2—Owen Hart & Yokozuna, 3—Rick & Scott Steiner

1994: The Nasty Boys
Runners-up: 1—The Headshrinkers, 2—Public Enemy, 3—The Rock 'n' Roll Express

1993: Rick & Scott Steiner
Runners-up: 1—The Hollywood Blonds, 2—Money Inc., 3—The Heavenly Bodies

1992: Terry Gordy & Steve Williams
Runners-up: 1—The Natural Disasters, 2—Rick & Scott Steiner, 3—Barry Windham & Dustin Rhodes

1991: Larry Zbyszko & Arn Anderson
Runners-up: 1—Legion of Doom, 2—Rick & Scott Steiner, 3—Robert Fuller & Jeff Jarrett

1990: Rick & Scott Steiner
Runners-up: 1—Demolition, 2—Doom, 3—Legion of Doom

1989: Tully Blanchard & Arn Anderson
Runners-up: 1—Demolition, 2—The Road Warriors, 3—Jim Garvin & Michael Hayes

1988: The Road Warriors
Runners-up: 1—The Midnight Express, 2—Demolition, 3—Tully Blanchard & Arn Anderson

1987: The Midnight Express
Runners-up: 1—The Hart Foundation, 2—The Road Warriors, 3—The Rock 'n' Roll Express

1986: The Rock 'n' Roll Express
Runners-up: 1—The Road Warriors, 2—The British Bulldogs, 3—The Midnight Rockers

The Rock 'n' Roll Express: 1986

The Road Warriors: 1985

1985: The Road Warriors
Runners-up: 1—Ted DiBiase & Steve Williams, 2—Ivan & Nikita Koloff, 3—The British Bulldogs

1984: The Road Warriors
Runners-up: 1—Kerry, Kevin, & Mike Von Erich, 2—The Fabulous Ones, 3—The Rock 'n' Roll Express

1983: The Road Warriors
Runners-up: 1—Kerry, Kevin, & David Von Erich, 2—Michael Hayes, Terry Gordy, & Buddy Roberts, 3—Jack & Jerry Brisco

1982: Greg Gagne & Jim Brunzell
Runners-up: 1—Mr. Fuji & Mr. Saito, 2—The Freebirds, 3—Ole Anderson & Stan Hansen

1981: The Fabulous Freebirds
Runners-up: 1—Rick Martel & Tony Garea, 2—Mr. Fuji & Mr. Saito, 3—Greg Gagne & Jim Brunzell

1980: Jimmy Snuka & Ray Stevens
Runners-up: 1—Mr. Wrestling & Mr. Wrestling II, 2—The Samoans, 3—Verne Gagne & Mad Dog Vachon

1979: Ivan Putski & Tito Santana
Runners-up: 1—Jerry & Johnny Valiant, 2—Paul Jones & Baron Von Raschke, 3—The Spoiler & Mark Lewin

1978: Rick Steamboat & Paul Jones
Runners-up: 1–The Yukon Lumberjacks, 2—Mike Graham & Steve Keirn, 3—Greg Gagne & Jim Brunzell

1977: Gene & Ole Anderson
Runners-up: 1—Mr. Fuji & Prof. Tanaka, 2—Greg Gagne & Jim Brunzell, 3—Ric Flair & Greg Valentine

1976: The Executioners
Runners-up: 1—Gene & Ole Anderson, 2—Billy White Wolf & Chief Jay Strongbow, 3—Jimmy & Johnny Valiant

1975: Gene & Ole Anderson

1974: Jimmy & Johnny Valiant

1973: Nick Bockwinkel & Ray Stevens

1972: Bruiser & Crusher

MATCH OF THE YEAR

2003: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit, 2—Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle, 3—Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Jericho

2002: Hulk Hogan vs. The Rock
Runners-up: 1—Triple-H vs. Shawn Michaels, 2—Eddie Guerrero vs. Rob Van Dam, 3—Kurt Angle & Chris Benoit vs. Edge & Rey Misterio Jr.

2001: Christian & Edge vs. The Hardy Boyz vs. The Dudley Boyz

Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin vs. Triple-H, 2—The Rock vs. Chris Jericho, 3—Jeff Hardy vs. Rob Van Dam

2000: Christian & Edge vs. The Hardy Boyz vs. The Dudley Boyz
Runners-up: 1—Chris Jericho vs. Triple-H, 2—Christian & Edge vs. The Hardy Boyz vs. The Dudley Boyz, 3—Super Crazy vs. Yoshihiro Tajiri

1999: The Rock vs. Mankind
Runners-up: 1—Rob Van Dam vs. Jerry Lynn, 2—Steve Austin vs. Vince McMahon, 3—The Rock vs. Steve Austin

1998: The Undertaker vs. Mankind
Runners-up: 1—Shawn Michaels vs. Steve Austin, 2—Bill Goldberg vs. Hollywood Hogan, 3—Taz vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

1997: Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—Eddie Guerrero vs. Rey Misterio Jr., 2—Shawn Michaels vs. The Undertaker, 3—Terry Funk vs. The Sandman vs. Stevie Richards

1996: Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart
Runners-up: 1—Shawn Michaels vs. Mankind, 2—Sabu vs. Rob Van Dam, 3—War Games

1995: Diesel vs. Shawn Michaels
Runners-up: 1—Jeff Jarrett vs. Shawn Michaels, 2—Harlem Heat vs. The Nasty Boys, 3—Psicosis vs. Rey Misterio Jr.

1994: Shawn Michaels vs. Razor Ramon
Runners-up: 1—The Nasty Boys vs. Cactus Jack & Maxx Payne, 2—Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan, 3—Alundra Blayze vs. Bull Nakano

1993: Shawn Michaels vs. Marty Jannetty
Runners-up: 1—Rick & Scott Steiner vs. The Heavenly Bodies, 2—Rick Rude vs. Dustin Rhodes, 3—Cactus Jack vs. Big Van Vader

1992: Davey Boy Smith vs. Bret Hart
Runners-up: 1—Brian Pillman vs. Jushin Liger, 2—Royal Rumble, 3—Rick Steamboat vs. Rick Rude

1991: The Steiners vs. Sting & Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Bret Hart vs. Curt Hennig, 2—Lex Luger vs. Ron Simmons, 3—Cactus Jack vs. Eddie Gilbert

1990: Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior (Warrior wins WWF World title)
Runners-up: 1—Sting vs. Ric Flair, 2—Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake, 3—Royal Rumble

Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin: 1997

1989: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat (Flair wins his sixth NWA World title)
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage, 2—Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat, 3—Eric Embry vs. P.Y. Chu-Hi

1988: Andre the Giant vs. Hulk Hogan (Andre wins WWF World title)
Runners-up: 1—Sting vs. Ric Flair, 2—Jerry Lawler vs. Curt Hennig, 3—Ultimate Warrior vs. Honky Tonk Man

1987: Rick Steamboat vs. Randy Savage (Steamboat wins WWF I-C title)
Runners-up: 1—War Games: The Match Beyond I, 2—Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant, 3—Ronnie Garvin vs. Ric Flair

1986: Dusty Rhodes vs. Ric Flair (Dusty wins NWA World title at Great American Bash)
Runners-up: 1—The British Bulldogs vs. Greg Valentine & Brutus Beefcake, 2—The Road Warriors vs. Ronnie Garvin & Magnum T.A., 3—Hulk Hogan vs. Paul Orndorff

1985: Hulk Hogan & Mr. T vs. Roddy Piper & Paul Orndorff (WrestleMania I)
Runners-up: 1—The Road Warriors vs. Ivan & Nikita Koloff, 2—Ric Flair vs. Nikita Koloff, 3—Rick Martel vs. Bob Backlund

1984: Kerry Von Erich vs. Ric Flair (Von Erich captures NWA World title)
Runners-up: 1—Rick Martel vs. Jumbo Tsuruta, 2—Hulk Hogan vs. The Iron Sheik, 3—Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat

1983: Harley Race vs. Ric Flair (Race wins seventh NWA World title)
Runners-up: 1—Rick Steamboat & Jay Youngblood vs. Sgt. Slaughter & Don Kernodle, 2—Don Muraco vs. Pedro Morales, 3—Tommy Rich vs. Buzz Sawyer

1982: Bob Backlund vs. Jimmy Snuka (cage match)
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund vs. Ric Flair, 2—Nick Bockwinkel vs. Otto Wanz, 3—Nick Bockwinkel vs. Otto Wanz

1981: Andre the Giant vs. Killer Khan
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair vs. Dusty Rhodes, 2—Bob Backlund vs. Don Muraco, 3—Michael Hayes vs. Terry Gordy

1980: Bruno Sammartino vs. Larry Zbyszko (cage match)
Runners-up: 1—Andre the Giant vs. Hulk Hogan, 2—Verne Gagne vs. Nick Bockwinkel, 3—Dusty Rhodes vs. Bob Backlund

1979: Dusty Rhodes vs. Harley Race (Rhodes wins NWA World title)
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund vs. Pat Patterson, 2—Nick Bockwinkel vs. Bob Backlund, 3—Mr. Wrestling II vs. Ernie Ladd

1978: Bob Backlund vs. Superstar Graham (Backlund wins WWF World title)
Runners-up: 1—Blackjack Mulligan vs. Ric Flair, 2—Dusty Rhodes vs. Superstar Graham (bullrope match) 3—Rick Steamboat vs. Ric Flair

1977: Superstar Graham vs. Bruno Sammartino (Graham wins WWF World title)
Runners-up: 1—Dusty Rhodes vs. Superstar Graham, 2—Andre the Giant vs. Ric Flair, 3—Greg Gagne vs. Bob Backlund

1976: Bruno Sammartino vs. Stan Hansen
Runners-up: 1—Terry Funk vs. Rocky Johnson, 2—Nick Bockwinkel vs. Baron Von Raschke, 3—Andre the Giant vs. Abdullah the Butcher

1975: Bruno Sammartino vs. Spiros

Arion
1974: Dory Funk Jr. vs. Jack Brisco
1973: Harley Race vs. Dory Funk Jr. (Race wins first NWA World title)
1972: Bruno Sammartino wins 22-man Los Angeles battle royal

FEUD OF THE YEAR

2003: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon, 2—Steve Austin vs. Eric Bischoff, 3—Jeff Jarrett vs. Raven

2002: Eric Bischoff vs. Stephanie McMahon
Runners-up: 1—Kurt Angle vs. Edge, 2—Triple-H vs. Stephanie McMahon, 3—Molly Holly vs. Trish Stratus

2001: Shane McMahon vs. Vince McMahon
Runners-up: 1—Booker T vs. The Rock, 2—Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle, 3—Edge vs. Christian

2000: Triple-H vs. Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Triple-H vs. The Rock, 2—Booker T vs. Jeff Jarrett, 3—Christian & Edge vs. The Hardy Boyz

1999: Steve Austin vs. Vince McMahon
Runners-up: 1—Triple-H vs. The Rock, 2—Jerry Lynn vs. Rob Van Dam, 3—Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan

1998: Steve Austin vs. Vince McMahon
Runners-up: 1—NWO Wolfpac vs. NWO Hollywood, 2—Ric Flair vs. Eric Bischoff, 3—Rocky Maivia vs. Ken Shamrock

1997: Randy Savage vs. Dallas Page
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin vs. Bret Hart, 2—Hulk Hogan vs. Roddy Piper, 3—Sabu vs. Taz

1996: Eric Bischoff vs. Vince McMahon
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair vs. Randy Savage, 2—Mankind vs. The Undertaker, 3—Jamie Dundee vs. Wolfie D

1995: Axl Rotten vs. Ian Rotten
Runners-up: 1—Harlem Heat vs. The Nasty Boys, 2—Jeff Jarrett vs. Razor Ramon, 3—Ric Flair vs. Randy Savage

1994: Bret Hart vs. Owen Hart
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan vs. Ric Flair, 2—Randy Savage vs. Crush, 3—Sabu vs. Terry Funk

1993: Bret Hart vs. Jerry Lawler
Runners-up: 1—Rick Rude vs. Dustin Rhodes, 2—Cactus Jack vs. Big Van Vader, 3—Tony Anthony vs. Tracey Smothers

1992: The Moondogs vs. Jeff Jarrett & Jerry Lawler
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair vs. Randy Savage, 2—Ultimate Warrior vs. Papa Shango, 3—Rick Rude vs. Rick Steamboat

1991: Ultimate Warrior vs. The Undertaker
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan vs. Sgt. Slaughter, 2—Sting vs. Cactus Jack & Abdullah the Butcher, 3—Lex Luger vs. Ron Simmons

1990: Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake, 2—Ultimate Warrior vs. Rick Rude, 3—Chris Adams vs. Steve Austin

1989: Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage, 2—Akbar's Army vs. Eric Embry, 3—Roddy Piper vs. Rick Rude

1988: Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Rick Rude vs. Jake Roberts, 2—Kerry Von Erich vs. Jerry Lawler, 3—Hulk Hogan & Randy Savage vs. Ted DiBiase & Andre the Giant

1987: Four Horsemen vs. Superpowers & Road Warriors
Runners-up: 1—Randy Savage vs. Rick Steamboat, 2—Jerry Lawler vs. Tommy Rich & Austin Idol, 3—Brian Adias vs. Kevin Von Erich

1986: Hulk Hogan vs. Paul Orndorff
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair vs. Dusty Rhodes, 2—The Sheepherders vs. The Fantastics, 3—The Midnight Express vs. The Rock 'n' Roll Express

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

2003: Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—Rob Van Dam, 3—Rey Misterio Jr.

2002: Rob Van Dam
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Booker T, 3—The Rock

2001: Rob Van Dam
Runners-up: 1—The Rock, 2—Chris Jericho, 3—Kurt Angle

2000: The Rock
Runners-up: 1—Rob Van Dam, 2—Chris Jericho, 3—Bill Goldberg

1999: The Rock
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—Bill Goldberg, 3—Mankind

1998: Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—Bill Goldberg, 2—Rocky Maivia, 3—Dallas Page

1997: Sting
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—Ric Flair, 3—Dallas Page

1996: Shawn Michaels
Runners-up: 1—Randy Savage, 2—Sid Vicious, 3—The Undertaker

1995: Shawn Michaels
Runners-up: 1—Sting, 2—Diesel, 3—Hulk Hogan

1994: Sting
Runners-up: 1—Bret Hart, 2—The Undertaker, 3—Hulk Hogan

1993: Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Sting, 2—Bret Hart, 3—Dustin Rhodes

1992: Sting
Runners-up: 1—The Ultimate Warrior, 2—The Undertaker, 3—Ron Simmons

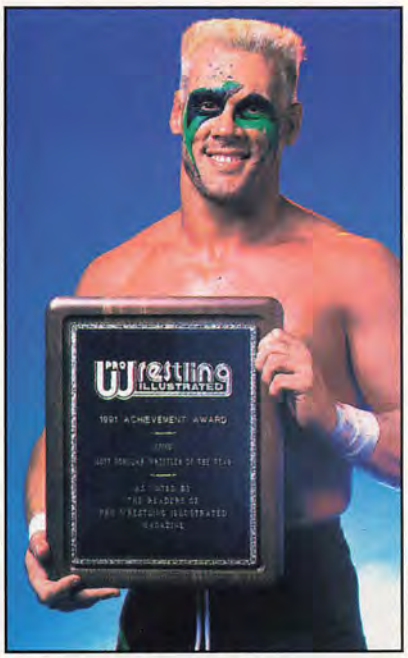
1991: Sting
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Sid Justice, 3—Rick & Scott Steiner

1990: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Sting, 2—Ultimate Warrior, 3—Lex Luger

1989: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Sting, 3—The Ultimate Warrior

1988: Randy Savage
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Sting, 3—Lex Luger

1987: Dusty Rhodes
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—



Sting: 1991

Randy Savage, 3—Nikita Koloff

1986: Roddy Piper
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Rick Morton, 3—Nikita Koloff

1985: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Magnum T.A., 2—Kerry Von Erich, 3—Tito Santana

1984: Kerry Von Erich
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Dusty Rhodes, 3—Sgt. Slaughter

1983: Jimmy Snuka
Runners-up: 1—Dusty Rhodes, 2—David Von Erich, 3—Junkyard Dog

1982: Andre the Giant
Runners-up: 1—Tommy Rich, 2—Hulk Hogan, 3—Dusty Rhodes

1981: Tommy Rich
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund, 2—Andre the Giant, 3—Dusty Rhodes

1980: Mr. Wrestling II
Runners-up: 1—Dusty Rhodes, 2—Andre the Giant, 3—Bruno Sammartino

1979: Dusty Rhodes
Runners-up: 1—Andre the Giant, 2—Ivan Putski, 3—Mr. Wrestling II

1978: Dusty Rhodes
Runners-up: 1—Andre the Giant, 2—Rick Steamboat, 3—Bob Backlund

1977: Andre the Giant
Runners-up: 1—Dusty Rhodes, 2—Bob Backlund, 3—Mil Mascaras

Andre the Giant: 1982

1976: Wahoo McDaniel
Runners-up: 1—Chief Jay Strongbow, 2—Mr. Wrestling II, 3—Ivan Putski

1975: Mil Mascaras

1974: Billy Robinson

1973: Chief Jay Strongbow

1972: Jack Brisco/Fred Curry (tie)

MOST HATED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

2003: Triple-H
Runners-up: 1—Kane, 2—Vince McMahon, 3—Test

2002: Chris Jericho
Runners-up: 1—The Un-Americans, 2—Kurt Angle, 3—Triple-H

2001: Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—Booker T, 2—Kurt Angle, 3—Shane McMahon

2000: Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Triple-H, 2—Steven Richards, 3—Jeff Jarrett

1999: Dallas Page
Runners-up: 1—Triple-H, 2—The Undertaker, 3—The Dudley Boyz

1998: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Vince McMahon, 2—Eric Bischoff, 3—Bret Hart

1997: Bret Hart
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Owen Hart, 3—Curt Hennig

1996: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Goldust, 2—Jerry Lawler, 3—The Giant

1995: Jerry Lawler
Runners-up: 1—Kevin Sullivan, 2—The Gangstas, 3—Davey Boy Smith

1994: Bob Backlund
Runners-up: 1—Owen Hart, 2—Big Van Vader, 3—Jerry Lawler

1993: Jerry Lawler
Runners-up: 1—Big Van Vader, 2—Yokozuna, 3—Shawn Michaels

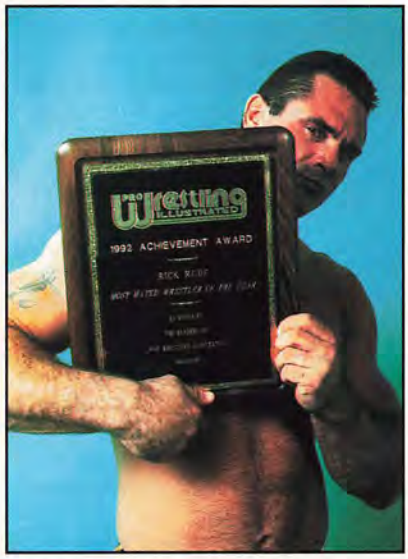
1992: Rick Rude
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Jake Roberts, 3—The Moondogs

1991: Sgt. Slaughter
Runners-up: 1—The Undertaker, 2—Lex Luger, 3—Jake Roberts

1990: Earthquake
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Rick Rude, 3—Eddie Gilbert

1989: Randy Savage
Runners-up: 1—Terry Funk, 2—Rick Rude, 3—Lex Luger

1988: Andre the Giant



Rick Rude: 1992

Runners-up: 1—Barry Windham, 2—Eddie Gilbert, 3—Ted DiBiase

1987: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Andre the Giant, 2—Honky Tonk Man, 3—Lex Luger

1986: Paul Orndorff
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Col. DeBeers, 3—Rick Rude

1985: Roddy Piper
Runners-up: 1—Chris Adams, 2—Ted DiBiase, 3—John Studd

1984: Roddy Piper
Runners-up: 1—Kevin Sullivan, 2—Tully Blanchard, 3—The Iron Sheik

1983: Greg Valentine
Runners-up: 1—Masked Superstar, 2—Kevin Sullivan, 3—Michael Hayes

1982: Ted DiBiase
Runners-up: 1—Blackjack Mulligan, 2—Superstar Graham, 3—Buzz Sawyer

1981: Ken Patera
Runners-up: 1—Don Muraco, 2—Nick Bockwinkel, 3—Roddy Piper

1980: Larry Zbyszko
Runners-up: 1—Greg Valentine, 2—Ernie Ladd, 3—Hulk Hogan

1979: Greg Valentine
Runners-up: 1—Terry Funk, 2—Ken Patera, 3—Ivan Koloff

1978: Ric Flair
Runners-up: 1—Ken Patera, 2—Victor Rivera, 3—Bob Orton Jr.

1977: Ken Patera
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Superstar Graham, 3—Nick

Bockwinkel
1976: Stan Hansen
Runners-up: 1—Ox Baker, 2—Terry Funk, 3—The Spoiler
1975: Greg Valentine
1974: The Great Mephisto
1973: Superstar Graham
1972: The Sheik

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

2003: John Cena
Runners-up: 1—Matt Hardy, 2—Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas, 3—Victoria
2002: Brock Lesnar
Runners-up: 1—Trish Stratus, 2—Jamie Noble, 3—A.J. Styles
2001: Edge
Runners-up: 1—Test, 2—The Hurricane, 3—Kurt Angle
2000: Steve Corino
Runners-up: 1—Lance Storm, 2—Scotty Too Hotty, 3—Justin Credible
1999: Jerry Lynn
Runners-up: 1—The Hardy Boyz, 2—Bob Holly, 3—Kanyon
1998: Booker T
Runners-up: 1—D-Lo Brown, 2—The New Age Outlaws, 3—Juventud Guerrera
1997: Ken Shamrock
Runners-up: 1—Steve McMichael, 2—The Headbangers, 3—Alex Wright
1996: Ahmed Johnson
Runners-up: 1—Chris Benoit, 2—Stevie Richards, 3—Taz
1995: Dallas Page
Runners-up: 1—Tommy Dreamer, 2—Harlem Heat, 3—Savio Vega
1994: Diesel
Runners-up: 1—Johnny B. Badd, 2—Sabu, 3—Owen Hart
1993: Yokozuna
Runners-up: 1—The Kid, 2—Brian Lee, 3—Tatanka
1992: Razor Ramon
Runners-up: 1—Ron Simmons, 2—Virgil, 3—Brian Christopher
1991: Dustin Rhodes
Runners-up: 1—Ron Simmons, 2—The Undertaker, 3—Crush
1990: Paul Roma
Runners-up: 1—Doom, 2—Tugboat, 3—Cactus Jack
1989: Scott Steiner
Runners-up: 1—Brutus Beefcake, 2—Jeff Jarrett, 3—P.Y. Chu-Hi
1988: Sting
Runners-up: 1—The Ultimate Warrior, 2—Iceman Parsons, 3—Jeff Jarrett
1987: Curt Hennig
Runners-up: 1—Al Perez, 2—Honky Tonk Man, 3—Sting
1986: Terry Gordy
Runners-up: 1—Scott Hall, 2—Sam Houston, 3—Wendell Cooley
1985: Steve Williams
Runners-up: 1—Brian Adias, 2—Nikita Koloff, 3—Randy Savage
1984: Billy Jack Haynes
Runners-up: 1—Magnum T.A., 2—Rick Martel, 3—Ronnie Garvin
1983: Brett Wayne Sawyer
Runners-up: 1—Mike Rotundo, 2—Pez Whatley, 3—Brad Rheingans
1982: Barry Windham
Runners-up: 1—Otto Wanz, 2—Buzz Sawyer, 3—Rick Martel
1981: Kevin Sullivan
Runners-up: 1—Sgt. Slaughter, 2—Charlie Cook, 3—Tito Santana
1980: Tony Atlas
Runners-up: 1—Larry Zbyszko, 2—Ted DiBiase, 3—Kerry Von Erich
1979: Tommy Rich
Runners-up: 1—Eddy Mansfield, 2—Kevin Von Erich, 3—Ted DiBiase
1978: Dino Bravo
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund, 2—Rick Steamboat, 3—Tony Atlas

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

2003: Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Bill Goldberg, 2—Raven, 3—Ultimo Dragon
2002: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Eddie Guerrero, 2—Chris Benoit, 3—Ron Killings
2001: Rob Van Dam
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—Booker T, 3—Scott Hall
2000: Rikishi
Runners-up: 1—Dusty Rhodes, 2—The Undertaker, 3—Bryan Clark
1999: Eddie Guerrero
Runners-up: 1—Buff Bagwell, 2—Curt Hennig, 3—Michael Hayes
1998: X-Pac
Runners-up: 1—Sting, 2—Dean Malenko, 3—The Warrior
1997: Bret Hart
Runners-up: 1—Curt Hennig, 2—Brian Pillman, 3—Ric Flair
1996: Sid Vicious
Runners-up: 1—Jake Roberts, 2—Faarooq, 3—Road Warrior Animal
1995: Randy Savage
Runners-up: 1—The Heavenly Bodies, 2—Savio Vega, 3—The Ultimate Warrior
1994: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund, 2—The Undertaker, 3—Alundra Blayze
1993: Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Brutus Beefcake, 2—Ric Flair, 3—Paul Roma
1992: The Ultimate Warrior
Runners-up: 1—Bob Backlund, 2—The Sheik, 3—Junkyard Dog

INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

2003: Zach Gowen
Runners-up: 1—Kurt Angle, 2—A.J. Styles, 3—Rey Misterio Jr.
2002: Eddie Guerrero
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Charlie Haas, 3—Chris Benoit
2001: Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Chris Jericho, 2—Shane McMahon, 3—Spike Dudley

Rikishi: 2000

2004 PWI ACHIEVEMENT: PAST AWARD WINNERS

2000: Booker T
Runners-up: 1—Mick Foley, 2—Crash Holly, 3—Chyna
1999: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Bret Hart, 2—X-Pac, 3—Hacksaw Duggan
1998: Bill Goldberg
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—Mankind, 3—Shane Douglas
1997: Terry Funk
Runners-up: 1—Steve Austin, 2—Perry Saturn, 3—Roddy Piper
1996: Jake Roberts
Runners-up: 1—Jushin Liger, 2—Ahmed Johnson, 3—Rey Misterio Jr.
1995: Barry Horowitz
Runners-up: 1—Sabu, 2—Antonio Inoki, 3—Dan Severn
1994: Bret Hart
Runners-up: 1—Terry Funk, 2—The Guardian Angel, 3—Dave Sullivan
1993: Cactus Jack
Runners-up: 1—Lex Luger, 2—The Kid, 3—Brutus Beefcake
1992: Ron Simmons
Runners-up: 1—The Undertaker, 2—Rick Steamboat, 3—Eric Embry
1991: The Patriot
Runners-up: 1—Jerry Lawler, 2—Sid Justice, 3—Bill Dundee
1990: Sting
Runners-up: 1—Hulk Hogan, 2—Jerry Lawler, 3—Nikolai Volkoff
1989: Eric Embry

Ron Simmons: 1992

Runners-up: 1—Nikita Koloff, 2—Billy Jack Haynes, 3—Ric Flair
1988: Jerry Lawler
Runners-up: 1—Kerry Von Erich, 2—Road Warrior Animal, 3—Jake Roberts
1987: Nikita Koloff
Runners-up: 1—Dynamite Kid, 2—Chris Adams, 3—Superstar Graham
1986: Chris Adams
Runners-up: 1—Magnum T.A., 2—Kerry Von Erich, 3—Steve Williams
1985: Mike Von Erich
Runners-up: 1—Paul Orndorff, 2—Hacksaw Duggan, 3—Kevin Von Erich
1984: Sgt. Slaughter
Runners-up: 1—Kerry Von Erich, 2—Kevin Von Erich, 3—Bob Backlund
1983: Hulk Hogan
Runners-up: 1—Roddy Piper, 2—Buzz Sawyer, 3—Buddy Rose
1982: Roddy Piper
Runners-up: 1—Jimmy Snuka, 2—Mil Mascaras, 3—Jimmy Valiant
1981: Bob Backlund
Runners-up: 1—Ted DiBiase, 2—Tito Santana, 3—Mr. Wrestling II
1980: Junkyard Dog
Runners-up: 1—Rick Steamboat, 2—Verne Gagne, 3—Mr. Florida
1979: Chief Jay Strongbow
Runners-up: 1—Ric Flair, 2—Mr. Wrestling II, 3—Dusty Rhodes
1978: Blackjack Mulligan
Runners-up: 1—Bruno Sammartino, 2—Mr. Wrestling II, 3—Jim Brunzell
1977: Bob Backlund
Runners-up: 1—Don Muraco, 2—Bruno Sammartino, 3—Terry Funk
1976: Bruno Sammartino
Runners-up: 1—Wahoo McDaniel, 2—Bob Roop, 3—Bob Armstrong
1975: Mike McCord
1974: Dick Murdoch
1973: Johnny Valentine
1972: Lord Al Hays

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

2003: Zach Gowen
Runners-up: 1—Sylvan Grenier, 2—Trinity, 3—Matt Morgan
2002: Maven
Runners-up: 1—Christopher Nowinski, 2—Nidia, 3—Taylor Matheny
2001: Randy Orton
Runners-up: 1—Brock Lesnar, 2—K-Kwik, 3—Prototype
2000: Kurt Angle
Runners-up: 1—Lita, 2—Mark Jindrak & Sean O'Haire, 3—Chuck Palumbo
1999: Shane McMahon
Runners-up: 1—Evan Karagias, 2—Vince McMahon, 3—Lash LeRoux
1998: Bill Goldberg
Runners-up: 1—Sable, 2—Darren Drozdov, 3—Mark Henry
1997: Prince Iaukea
Runners-up: 1—Ernest Miller, 2—Chris Chetti, 3—Brakus
1996: The Giant
Runners-up: 1—Steve McMichael, 2—Rocky Maivia, 3—Joe Gomez
1995: Alex Wright
Runners-up: 1—Sgt. Craig Pittman, 2—Lawrence Taylor, 3—Madd Maxxine
1994: 911
Runners-up: 1—Bob Holly, 2—Abbudah Singh, 3—Mikey Whipwreck
1993: Vampire Warrior
Runners-up: 1—Robbie Eagle, 2—Keith & Kent Cole, 3—The Headhunters
1992: Erik Watts
Runners-up: 1—Dallas Page, 2—Vladimir Koloff, 3—Chaz
1991: Johnny B. Badd
Runners-up: 1—The Patriot, 2—Terri Power, 3—Lightning Kid
1990: Steve Austin
Runners-up: 1—El Gigante, 2—Brad Anderson, 3—Chris Chavis
1989: Mike Enos & Wayne Bloom
Runners-up: 1—Dustin Rhodes, 2—Scotty the Body, 3—Johnathan Holliday
1988: Madusa Miceli
Runners-up: 1—Chris Benoit, 2—Max Pain, 3—Scott Steiner
1987: Owen Hart
Runners-up: 1—Bubba Rogers, 2—Shane Douglas, 3—Doug Furnas
1986: Lex Luger
Runners-up: 1—Bam Bam Bigelow, 2—Sting, 3—Tom Magee
1985: Nord the Barbarian
Runners-up: 1—Kendall Windham, 2—Dan Spivey, 3—Sam Houston
1984: Mike Von Erich
Runners-up: 1—Nikita Koloff, 2—Krusher Khrushchev, 3—Kevin Kelly
1983: Angelo Mosca Jr.
Runners-up: 1—King Kong Bundy, 2—Scott Armstrong, 3—Arn Anderson
1982: Brad Armstrong
Runners-up: 1—Tiger Mask, 2—Mike

Rotundo, 3—Kamala
1981: David Sammartino
Runners-up: 1—Brad Rheingans, 2—Curt Hennig, 3—Ron Richie
1980: Terry Taylor
Runners-up: 1—Barry Windham, 2—Rick McGraw, 3—Tom Prichard
1979: Sweet Brown Sugar
Runners-up: 1—Steve Travis, 2—Bryan St. John, 3—Eddie Gilbert
1978: Tommy Rich
Runners-up: 1—Jay Youngblood, 2—David Von Erich, 3—Tully Blanchard
1977: Rick Steamboat
Runners-up: 1—Jimmy Snuka, 2—John Studd, 3—Skip Young
1976: Bob Backlund
Runners-up: 1—Chavo Guerrero, 2—Steve Keirn, 3—Johnny Rivera
1975: Ric Flair
1974: Larry Zbyszko
1973: Cowboy Bob Orton/Tony Garea (tie)
1972: Mike Graham

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

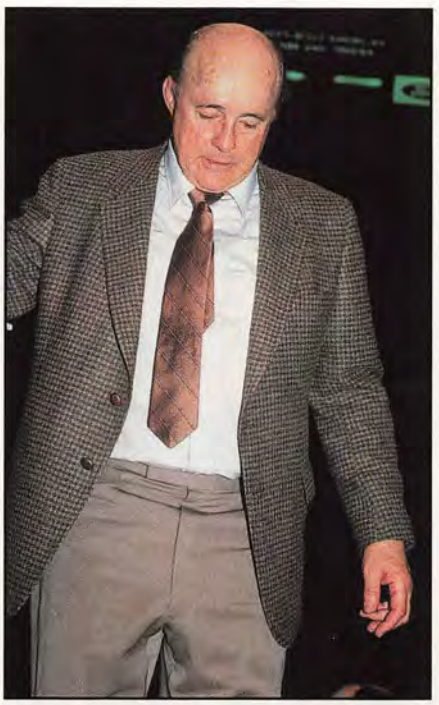
1999: Debra
Runners-up: 1—Jimmy Hart, 2—Bill Alfonso, 3—Paul Bearer
1998: Paul Bearer
Runners-up: 1—Bill Alfonso, 2—Tammy Lynn Sytch, 3—Paul Ellering
1997: Bill Alfonso
Runners-up: 1—Jacquelyn, 2—Paul Bearer, 3—Ted DiBiase
1996: Sunny
Runners-up: 1—Jimmy Hart, 2—Jim Cornette, 3—Bill Alfonso
1995: Jim Cornette
Runners-up: 1—Sherri Martel, 2—Col. Robert Parker, 3—Woman
1994: Jimmy Hart
Runners-up: 1—Ted DiBiase, 2—Col. Robert Parker, 3—Paul E. Dangerously
1993: Jim Cornette
Runners-up: 1—Harley Race, 2—Mr. Fuji, 3—Tammy Fytch
1992: Paul E. Dangerously
Runners-up: 1—Curt Hennig, 2—Harley Race, 3—Jim Cornette
1991: Bobby Heenan
Runners-up: 1—Harley Race, 2—Alexandra York, 3—Paul Bearer
1990: Teddy Long
Runners-up: 1—Bobby Heenan, 2—Ole Anderson, 3—Jim Cornette
1989: Bobby Heenan
Runners-up: 1—Gary Hart, 2—Teddy Long, 3—Gen. Skandor Akbar
1988: J.J. Dillon
Runners-up: 1—Elizabeth, 2—Jim Cornette, 3—Paul E. Dangerously
1987: Jimmy Hart
Runners-up: 1—J.J. Dillon, 2—Jim Cornette, 3—Paul E. Dangerously
1986: Capt. Lou Albano
Runners-up: 1—Paul Ellering, 2—Elizabeth, 3—Jim Cornette
1985: Jim Cornette
Runners-up: 1—Capt. Lou Albano, 2—Paul Ellering, 3—Bobby Heenan
1984: Paul Ellering
Runners-up: 1—Jimmy Hart, 2—Jim Cornette, 3—James J. Dillon
1983: James J. Dillon
Runners-up: 1—Sheik Adnan Al-Kaissie, 2—Capt. Lou Albano, 3—Paul Ellering
1982: James J. DIllon
Runners-up: 1—Arnold Skoaland, 2—Sonny King, 3—Jimmy Hart
1981: Capt. Lou Albano
Runners-up: 1—Arnold Skoaland, 2—Sir Oliver Humperdink, 3—The Grand Wizard
1980: Sir Oliver Humperdink
Runners-up: 1—Arnold Skoaland, 2—Capt. Lou Albano, 3—The Great Mephisto
1979: Arnold Skoaland
Runners-up: 1—Capt. Lou Albano, 2—Buddy Rogers, 3—Sir Oliver Humperdink
1978: Arnold Skoaland
Runners-up: 1—The Grand Wizard, 2—Bobby Heenan, 3—Gary Hart
1977: The Grand Wizard
Runners-up: 1—Bobby Heenan, 2—Capt. Lou Albano, 3—Lord Al Hays
1976: Bobby Heenan
Runners-up: 1—Lou Albano, 2—Fred Blassie, 3—Gary Hart
1975: George "Crybaby" Cannon
1974: Capt. Lou Albano
1973: The Grand Wizard
1972: Bobby Heenan

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

2003: Trish Stratus
Runners-up: 1—Stephanie McMahon, 2—Victoria, 3—Torrie Wilson
2002: Trish Stratus
Runners-up: 1—Stephanie McMahon, 2—Stacy Keibler, 3—Torrie Wilson
2001: Lita
Runners-up: 1—Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley, 2—Stacy Keibler, 3—Torrie Wilson
2000: Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley
Runners-up: 1—Lita, 2—Chyna, 3—Major Gunns

STANLEY WESTON/ EDITORS' AWARD

2003: Bret Hart
2002: Jim Ross
2001: Johnny Valentine
2000: Freddie Blassie
1999: Owen Hart
1998: Bobo Brazil
1997: Arn Anderson
1996: Dan Hodge
1995: Rick Steamboat
1994: Capt. Lou Albano
1993: Andre The Giant
1992: Stanley Weston
1991: Fabulous Moolah
1990: Buddy Rogers
1989: Gordon Solie
1988: Bruiser Brody & Adrian Adonis
1987: Paul Boesch
1986: Verne Gagne
1985: Dan Shocket
1984: David Von Erich
1983: The Grand Wizard
1982: Lou Thesz
1981: Bruno Sammartino



Verne Gagne: 1986

2004 PWI ACHIEVEMENT: TITLE CHANGES 2004

The following is a cumulative listing of all major title changes to have taken place in 2004 up to press time. For a comprehensive up-to-date title listing, be sure to check out the "Roll Call Of Champions" in each issue of *Inside Wrestling*.

Toshiaki Kawada

Kensuke Sasaki

ALL-JAPAN TRIPLE CROWN

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE

Toshiaki Kawada has held this title since September 6, 2003.

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Kaz Hayashi & Satoshi Kojima	Keiji Muto & Arashi	Osaka, Japan	January 18
Kendo Ka Shin & Yuji Nagata	Kaz Hayashi & Satoshi Kojima	Nagoya, Japan	June 12

ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Kaz Hayashi	Taka Michinoku	Tokyo, Japan[1]	February 22

[1]This was a match for the vacant title, as previous champion Kendo Ka Shin was stripped for not defending it.

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Hiroyoshi Tenzan	Genichiro Tenryu	Tokyo, Japan[1]	February 15
Kensuke Sasaki	Hiroyoshi Tenzan	Tokyo, Japan	March 12
Bob Sapp	Kensuke Sasaki	Tokyo, Japan	March 28
Kazuyuki Fujita	Hiroshi Tanahashi	Osaka, Japan[2]	June 5
Kensuke Sasaki	Kazuyuki Fujita	Tokyo, Japan	October 9

[1]This was the final match of a tournament held to fill a vacancy when previous champion Shinsuke Nakamura had to give up the title due to injury.
[2]This was a match for the vacant title, as Bob Sapp gave it up.

IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Minoru Suzuki & Yoshihiro Takayama	Osamu Nishimura & Hiroyoshi Tenzan	Sapporo, Japan	February 1

IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE

Heat has held this title since December 14, 2003.

NWA HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
A.J. Styles	Jeff Jarrett	Nashville, TN	April 21
Ron Killings	A.J. Styles	Nashville, TN[1]	May 19
Jeff Jarrett	Ron Killings	Nashville, TN[2]	June 2

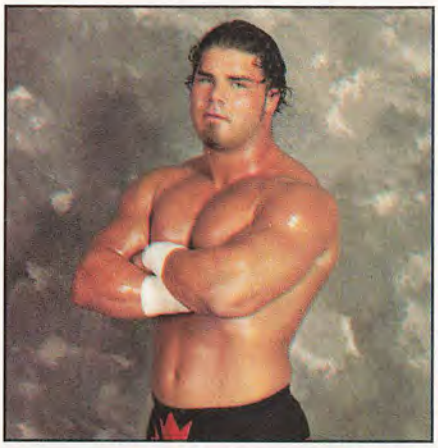
[1]This was a four-way match also involving Chris Harris and Raven.
[2]This was a five-way match also involving Chris Harris, Raven, and A.J. Styles.

Jeff Jarrett

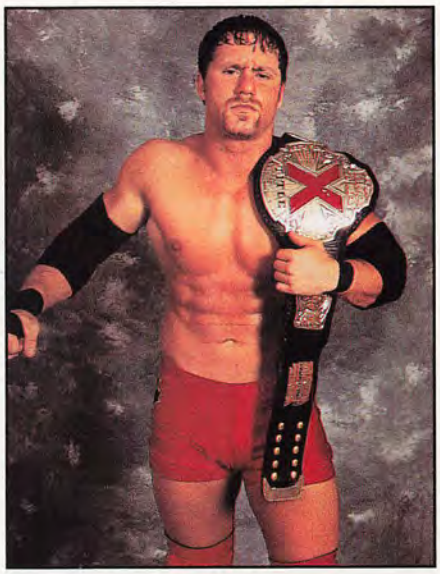
NWA TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Legend & Kevin Northcutt	B.G. James & Ron Killings	Nashville, TN	January 28
A.J. Styles & Abyss	Legend & Kevin Northcutt	Nashville, TN[1]	February 4
Kid Kash & Dallas	Christopher Daniels & Low-Ki	Nashville, TN[2]	March 31
D-Lo Brown & Apolo	Kid Kash & Dallas	Nashville, TN[3]	April 14
Kid Kash & Dallas	D-Lo Brown & Apolo	Nashville, TN[4]	April 21
Chris Harris & James Storm	Kid Kash & Dallas	Orlando, FL	June 3
Andy Douglas & Chase Stevens	Chris Harris & James Storm	Nashville, TN	July 7
Chris Harris & Elix Skipper	Andy Douglas & Chase Stevens	Nashville, TN	September 8
Christopher Daniels & James Storm	Chris Harris & Elix Skipper	Orlando, FL	September 21
Bobby Rude & Eric Young	Christopher Daniels & James Storm	Orlando, FL	October 12
B.G. James & Konnan	Bobby Rude & Eric Young	Orlando, FL	November 7
Bobby Rude & Eric Young	B.G. James & Ron Killings	Orlando, FL[5]	December 5

[1]Styles actually wrestled this match on his own, as Abyss never came out for the bout.
[2]This was the final match of a tournament to crown new champions. A.J. Styles and Abyss gave up the title because they had no interest in teaming.
[3]Brown and Apolo won this match by disqualification, but a TNA rule allows titles to change hands on a DQ.
[4]Kid Kash and Dallas won this match (and the title) by disqualification.
[5]Ron Killings substituted for an injured Konnan in this match.


Bobby Rude

Eric Young



Petey Williams

Chris Cage

TNA X TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Chris Sabin	Michael Shane	Nashville, TN[1]	January 7
Frankie Kazarian	Red	Nashville, TN[2]	March 31
A.J. Styles	Frankie Kazarian	Nashville, TN	June 9
Frankie Kazarian & Michael Shane	A.J. Styles	Nashville, TN[3]	July 28
Petey Williams	Frankie Kazarian & Michael Shane	Nashville, TN[4]	August 11

[1]This was a four-way "Ultimate X" match also involving Christopher Daniels and Low-Ki.

[2]Chris Sabin was stripped of the title due to injury. This was a match to fill the vacancy.

[3]Kazarian and Shane co-won the championship in a three-way "Ultimate X" match when both grabbed the belt suspended above the ring and felt to the mat with it simultaneously.

[4]This was a 21-man gauntlet match for the title.

OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Nick Dinsmore	Johnny Jeter	Louisville, KY[1]	January 7
Matt Morgan	Nick Dinsmore	Louisville, KY	April 14
Chris Cage	Matt Morgan	Louisville, KY	October 13

[1]The title was held up after Dinsmore and Jeter simultaneously pinned previous champion Mark Magnus in a three-way match on December 3. This was a match for that held-up title.

OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING SOUTHERN TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Chris Cage & Tank Toland	Nova & Aaron Stevens	Louisville, KY	March 3
Brent Albright & Chris Masters	Chris Cage & Tank Toland	Louisville, KY	March 31
Mac Johnson & Seth Skyfire	Brent Albright & Chris Masters	Louisville, KY	June 30
Chris Cage & Tank Toland	Mac Johnson & Seth Skyfire	Louisville, KY[1]	September 8
Mac Johnson & Seth Skyfire	Chris Cage & Tank Toland	Louisville, KY[2]	September 29
Joey Matthews & Johnny Nitro	Mac Johnson & Seth Skyfire	Louisville, KY	November 10

[1]This was a four-team elimination match also involving the teams of Danny Inferno and Aaron Stevens and Brent Albright and Chris Masters.

[2]The title was held up one week after Cage and Toland won it on a controversial finish. This was a rematch between the two previous champions.

PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE

Kenta Kobashi has held this title since March 2, 2003.

PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Mitsuharu Misawa & Yoshinari Ogawa	Yuji Nagata & Hiroshi Tanahashi	Tokyo, Japan	January 10

PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Jushin Liger	Takashi Sugiura	Tokyo, Japan	January 4
Yoshinobu Kanemaru	Jushin Liger	Tokyo, Japan	July 10

RING OF HONOR TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE

Samoa Joe has held this title since March 22, 2003.

Samoa Joe

RING OF HONOR PURE WRESTLING TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
A.J. Styles	C.M. Punk	Braintree, MA[1]	February 14
Doug Williams	Alex Shelley	Elizabeth, NJ[2]	July 17
John Walters	Doug Williams	Braintree, MA	August 28

[1]This was the final match of an eight-man tournament held to determine the first ROH pure wrestling champion.

[2]This was the final match of a tournament for the vacant title. Previous champion A.J. Styles was stripped after TNA stopped allowing its contracted wrestlers to compete for Ring of Honor.

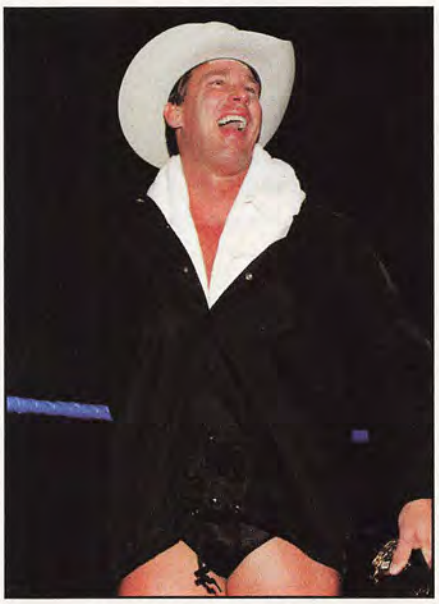
RING OF HONOR TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Colt Cabana & C.M. Punk	Jay & Mark Briscoe	Chicago Ridge, IL	April 24
Dan Maff & B.J. Whitmer	Colt Cabana & C.M. Punk	Lexington, MA	May 15
Jay & Mark Briscoe	Dan Maff & B.J. Whitmer	Lexington, MA	May 15
Colt Cabana & C.M. Punk	Jay & Mark Briscoe	Lexington, MA	May 15
Ricky Reyes & Rocky Romero	Colt Cabana & C.M. Punk	Essington, PA	August 7

Rocky Romero & Ricky Reyes

2004 PWI Achievement: Title Changes 2004

Triple-H



John Bradshaw Layfield

WWE RAW TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Chris Benoit	Triple-H	New York, NY[1]	March 14
Randy Orton	Chris Benoit	Toronto, Ontario	August 15
Triple-H	Randy Orton	Portland, OR	September 12

[1]This was a three-way match also involving Shawn Michaels.

WWE SMACKDOWN TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Eddie Guerrero	Brock Lesnar	San Francisco, CA	February 15
John Bradshaw Layfield	Eddie Guerrero	Norfolk, VA	June 27

WWE RAW TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Booker T & Rob Van Dam	Batista & Ric Flair	Bakersfield, CA	February 16
Batista & Ric Flair	Booker T & Rob Van Dam	Detroit, MI	March 22
Chris Benoit & Edge	Batista & Ric Flair	Calgary, Alberta	April 19
Robert Conway & Sylvan Grenier	Chris Benoit & Edge	Montreal, Quebec	May 31
Chris Benoit & Edge	Robert Conway & Sylvan Grenier	Milwaukee, WI	October 19
Robert Conway & Sylvan Grenier	Chris Benoit & Edge	Peoria, IL	November 1
William Regal & Eugene	Robert Conway & Sylvan Grenier	Indianapolis, IN[1]	November 15

[1]This was a three-way elimination match also involving Rhyno and Tajiri.

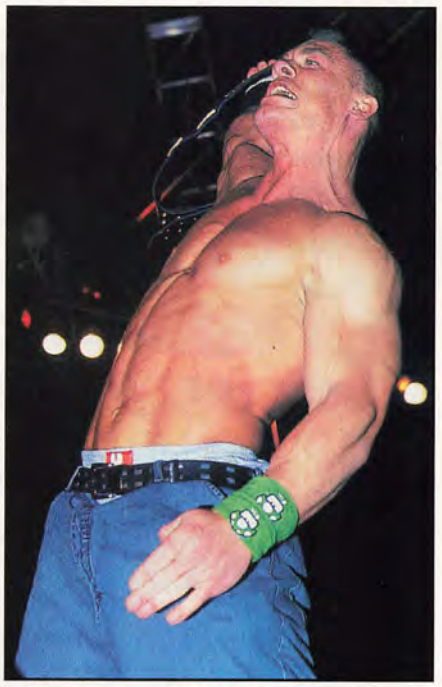
WWE SMACKDOWN TAG TEAM TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Rikishi & Scotty Too Hotty	The Basham Brothers	Cleveland, OH	February 3
Charlie Haas & Rico	Rikishi & Scotty Too Hotty	Kelowna, British Columbia	April 20
Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley	Charlie Haas & Rico	Chicago, IL	June 15
Billy Kidman & Paul London	Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley	Winnipeg, Manitoba	July 6
Rene Dupree & Kenzo Suzuki	Billy Kidman & Paul London	Tulsa, OK	September 7

WWE INTERCONTINENTAL TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Edge	Randy Orton	Hartford, CT	July 11
Chris Jericho	Christian	Portland, OR[1]	September 12
Shelton Benjamin	Chris Jericho	Milwaukee, WI	October 19

[1]This was a ladder match for the vacant title, as previous champion Edge was stripped of the championship because a groin injury prevented him from defending it.



John Cena

WWE U.S. TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
John Cena	The Big Show	New York, NY	March 14
Booker T	—	Cincinnati, OH[1]	July 27
John Cena	Booker T	East Rutherford, NJ[2]	October 3
Carlito Caribbean Cool	John Cena	Boston, MA	October 5
John Cena	Carlito Caribbean Cool	Dayton, OH	November 16

[1]Booker T won the vacant title in an eight-way elimination match. Previous champion John Cena had been stripped two weeks earlier when he struck Smackdown GM Kurt Angle.

[2]This was the final match of a best-of-five series for the title between Cena and Booker.

WWE CRUISERWEIGHT TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Chavo Guerrero Jr.	Rey Misterio Jr.	San Francisco, CA	February 15
Jacquelyn	Chavo Guerrero Jr.	Tucson, AZ	May 4
Chavo Guerrero Jr.	Jacquelyn	Los Angeles, CA	May 16
Chavo Guerrero Sr.	Chavo Guerrero Jr.	Las Vegas, NV[1]	May 18
Rey Misterio Jr.	Chavo Guerrero Sr.	Chicago, IL	June 15
Spike Dudley	Rey Misterio Jr.	Cincinnati, OH	July 27

[1]This was a three-way match also involving Spike Dudley.

WWE WOMEN'S TITLE

WON BY	WON FROM	LOCATION	DATE
Victoria	Molly Holly	Omaha, NE[1]	February 23
Trish Stratus	Victoria	Columbus, OH[2]	June 13

[1]This was a four-way elimination match also involving Lita and Jazz. Victoria pinned Lita in the end to win the title.

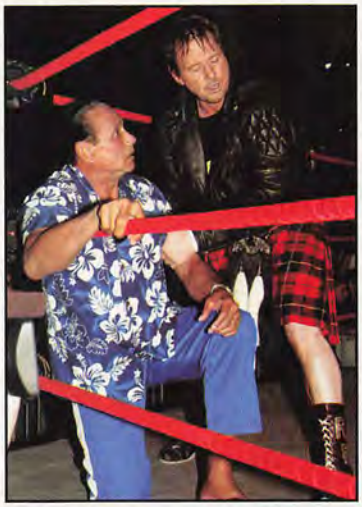
[2]This was a four-way match also involving Gail Kim and Lita.

Trish Stratus

2004 PWI Achievement

Finally, we close out this year-end issue of *PWI* by asking our editors and writers to pick the most enduring moment of the past year. In doing so, we close the book on 2004 and look ahead to the next 12 months!

STU SAKS [Publisher]: "The Carters and Jarretts have every reason to be giddy over the results of TNA's first supercard pay-per-view, Victory Road. By all early accounts, the show drew a pay-per-view buy rate that was beyond any realistic expectations. My lasting memory of that card—and (unfortunately) my enduring memory for the year—is not what it should be. The real stars of the show were A.J. Styles, Petey Williams, Jeff Hardy, and a bunch of men who worked their butts off in the X Division Gauntlet Rumble that was ultimately won by Hector Garza. Still, I can't get the non-wrestling appearances of Randy Savage, Scott Hall, Kevin Nash, Roddy Piper, and Jimmy Snuka out of my head. There was a curiosity about the first TNA PPV supercard, and the presence of these men added to the intrigue. But if TNA is ever going to be a real competitor to WWE, it has to establish itself as the 'cool' alternative. The NWO was a 'cool' alterative in the 1990s. It's over. Nostalgia trips can be momentarily pleasurable, and the appearance of these men might have added to the bottom line for this one night, but if there really is to be a victory for TNA ahead, they're going to have to take a different road."



DAVE LENKER [Editor-in-Chief]: "Were it not for Chris Benoit, this would have been Eddie Guerrero's year. But because Benoit's big world title win came at WrestleMania instead of a month earlier at No Way Out, and because his world title reign lasted well into the summer, whereas Guerrero's ended months earlier, he shined a bit brighter. I'd like to remember the look of joy and relief I saw on Eddie's face after he beat Brock Lesnar and finally claimed the first world title of his career, but it's awfully tough getting the image of blood gushing down his face during his match with JBL at Judgment Day. As he went into shock and was being rushed to the hospital after that match, I wonder if he wondered whether being a world champion was really worth it. I hope it was."

BRANDI MANKIEWICZ [Managing Editor]: "There wasn't a whole hell of a lot that was memorable for me this year. While I enjoyed many moments, none of them come jumping out at me right now. The best moment for me was something subtle, yet sustaining. I received a wonderful letter from Robbie Ellis, a wrestler now in his 60s, thanking us for ranking him in the *'PWI* 500.' With just 200 words, he reminded me why we do that annual ranking. 'I had been on the list in the past, a number of years ago, but honestly never expected to be listed again. I had to write because I was flattered and delighted to be included. Thank you so much,' wrote Ellis. It's hard, tedious work that is always rewarded with complaints from wrestlers, fan, and promoters. Getting a heartfelt letter of thanks from someone who has been at the top, bottom, and everywhere in between is enough to make it worthwhile."

HARRY BURKETT [Senior Writer]: "I'll never forget Batista hoisting Randy Orton on his shoulders on *Raw,* the night after SummerSlam, and all of Evolution celebrating the fact that Orton—the new WWE Raw champion—had beaten Chris Benoit on back-to-back nights. Then came the moment: Triple-H's beaming smile turning sour, his thumbs up turning to a thumbs down, and that 'Oh-I'm-really-screwed-now' expression on Orton's face. Batista backdropped Orton to the mat and joined Triple-H and Ric Flair in giving him the thrashing of his life. I had always thought Barry Windham turning against Lex Luger, thereby abandoning the NWA World tag team title back in 1988, was the best 'turn' of all-time. Evolution dumping Orton, and turning him into a fan favorite, surpassed that."

FRANK KREWDA [Senior Writer]: "Aside from the financial angle, I've never understood why some people associated with wrestling are so concerned with crossover appeal. Whatever it is,

I've always suspected that no matter how much money Hollywood throws behind Hulk Hogan, The Rock, etc., the non-wrestling establishment just doesn't 'get' professional wrestling and never will. One moment in 2004 crystallized that belief for me. It came when CNBC fired John Layfield Bradshaw for goose-stepping during a WWE card in Germany. Were Bradshaw's actions offensive? Yes. Were they over the top? Yep. Were they ill-advised? You bet. But they were also done in the line of duty. Bad guys have been crossing 'lines' for years. It's what they do. JBL is not known to be a warm person, but anyone who thinks he had malice in his heart when he took those infamous steps must also think Gene Snitsky kills babies or Undertaker is a living corpse. I'm all for righting history's wrongs, but Bradshaw didn't deserve to lose his job. Those who understand professional wrestling saw the incident for what it was: a wrestling villain being just that. The politically correct saw it as another opportunity to slam wrestling."

WILL WELSH [Senior Writer]: "After I finished watching 'American Dragon' Bryan Danielson and Austin Aries conclude what I thought was this year's Match of the Year, it made me

once again realize how lucky I am to be such a little part of this thing we call professional wrestling. In a year in which we saw Brock Lesnar dump on the industry that made him rich, it was refreshing to watch Danielson (pictured), who has incredible intensity, and Aries wrestle for 75 long, arduous minutes in Ring of Honor with nothing more than respect on the line. There weren't any titles up for grabs, they weren't on national television, and there were no WWE scouts in the arena. They wrestled the match of their lifetimes simply because they wanted to. I don't know of a greater compliment to the sport."

DAN MURPHY [Senior Writer]: "I think the lasting *image* of 2004 has to be Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero celebrating amidst all the confetti at the end of WrestleMania XX, just because it was inspirational to see two 'small' guys getting their moment at the biggest event of the year. But my favorite wrestling memory of the year was from the Super 8 Tournament, when Mike Kruel voluntarily handed over the ECWA heavyweight title after losing a tournament bout to Christopher Daniels. The title wasn't at stake in the match, but Kruel said that on that particular night, he was beaten by a better man who deserved the gold more than he did. It was a wonderful example of sportsmanship that capped off a thrilling match. Kruel sure earned my respect."

JASON LANGIN [Contributing Writer]: "I loved the negative reaction the raucous Philadelphia crowd gave to the outcome of the Triple H-Shawn Michaels match at this year's Royal Rumble. I felt that this was one of the best matches I have ever seen, but a *draw* for a last-man-standing match? That didn't make any sense and it tarnished a classic confrontation. But the crowd spoke volumes with all the booing. They weren't booing HBK or HHH—neither of whom could reach his feet before the referee's count reached 10—just the outcome. It's okay for one guy to win! I think WWE listened, as the rest of the year was filled with clean outcomes in a lot of the biggest matches."

JAMES GUTTMAN [Contributing Writer]: "If one thing stood out to me this year, it had to be what was supposed to be the dream match between Brock Lesnar and Bill Goldberg at WrestleMania XX. Seeing the two men, both on their way out of WWE, booed out of Madison Square Garden was surreal. Most of us remember ECW fans for being so vocal against wrestlers who were about to leave the company, but we'd never seen it from WWE fans on such a large scale. It showed WWE that the seats are filled with fans that are more devoted than they might have realized. Goldberg and Lesnar were history after that night, and although this was never mentioned on WWE TV beforehand, people knew it and reacted to it. Even guest ref Steve Austin was gone soon after. That match became the Bermuda Triangle of wrestling."

Drawing Blood

By Jason Conlan

Mister J s Twisted Year End Picks

MISTAKE OF THE YEAR

MAN OF THE YEAR - TIE

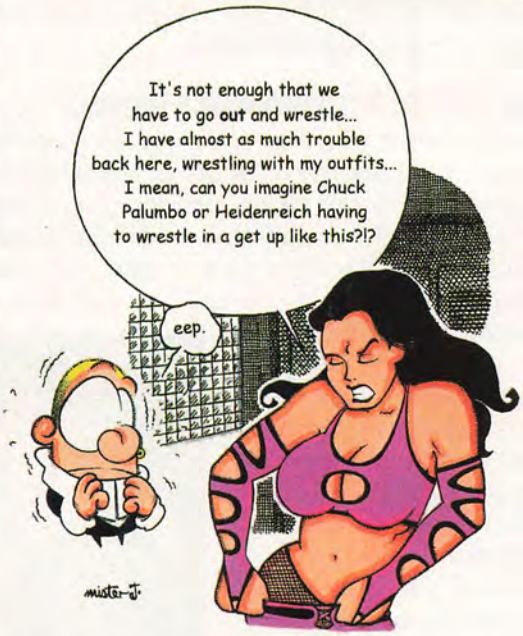
KID KASH-

For sticking up for the little man (himself naturally) & picking a locker room fight with the much larger Abyss.

ABYSS-

For finally shutting up that little pipsqueak Kid Kash.

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR - CHRISTIAN



WOMAN OF THE YEAR - VICTORIA

HEEL...(but he did fire Test and Billy Gunn, so in fact..)

FACE OF THE YEAR - VINCE McMAHON

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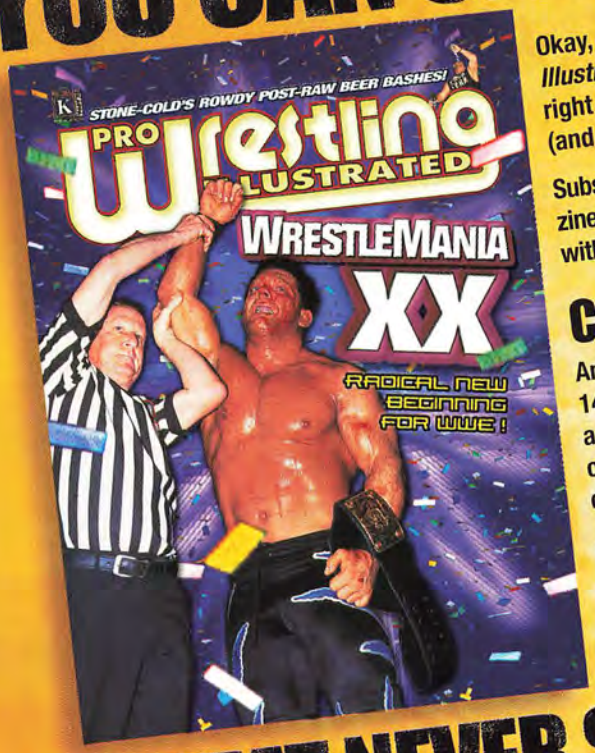

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